

CHAPTER III.

BUDDHA AND BODH GAYA.

THE district of Gayā may with justice be described as the Holy Land of Buddhism owing to the number of places it contains which are associated with the life and teaching of the great founder of that religion. It was here that Sākya Muni spent long years of penance and meditation before he attained the ideal he had set before him; here he finally won Buddhahood, *i.e.*, became free from the circle of re-births, and here he gained some of his earliest disciples after this great triumph. It was to this district that he turned at an early stage in his searchings after truth. Failing to find enlightenment in the ecstatic meditation affected by the teachers of Brahmanical philosophy, he determined to secure peace by a course of self-mortification, and with this intention wandered forth from Rājāgrīha (Rājgīr) to a wood in this district called Uruvilvā. Here, with five other ascetics, he entered on a fast lasting six long years, at the end of which he realized that the mortification of the flesh had brought him no nearer to the truth he sought, and that penance and austerity were not the means of obtaining deliverance from the evils and sufferings of life. He resumed his former diet, and when his five companions left him in anger at this change of life, he determined to give himself up to meditation in silent solitude. The tradition handed down by the Chinese pilgrim, Fa Hian, relates that he came to a cave, where he sat down and prayed that he might be granted a sign to show whether he was to arrive at the condition of perfect wisdom. Immediately his shadow appeared on the stone wall, the earth shook and the mountain quaked, and he heard the voices of the *Devas* telling him that that was not the place where he could obtain enlightenment. He then passed on towards the village of Senāni and met on his way a grass-cutter,

BUDDHA.

who offered him some bundles of grass, which he accepted. Having arrived at the Bodhī tree, he scattered the grass on the ground and sat down, vowing that though his skin, nerves and bones might waste away and his blood dry up, he would not leave the place until he obtained perfect enlightenment.

He then began a long vigil, giving himself up to higher and higher forms of meditation. A great struggle between good and evil ensued. He was assaulted by the hosts of evil, by fiends and demons of all kinds, and then, finding that they had no power to shake him, Māra, the spirit of sensuous desire, tempted him with the pleasures of the flesh; other temptations followed, all of which he conquered; and finally, as day broke, the light of knowledge burst upon his mind. In the first watch of the night of this final struggle he gained a knowledge of all his former states of existence, in the second of all present states of being, and in the third the knowledge of the chain of causes and effect; at the dawn of day his spiritual illumination was complete, he knew all things, and became Buddha, the enlightened. After obtaining this perfect enlightenment, Buddha went to a place a little to the north-east, and thence looked for a week at the sacred Bodhī tree without removing his gaze from it. Between this place and his seat under the Bodhī tree he spent a week walking to and fro, from east to west, wonderful flowers springing up in the places on which he set foot. After four weeks near the Bodhī tree, the master left it and meditated for another seven days under the goat-herd's banyan-tree, and then went to another spot where Muohilinda, the serpent king, coiled his body round him as he sat in meditation, and formed a canopy over his head to protect him from the rain. He then passed on to the Rajāyatna tree, where he remained another week, on the last day of which he made his first converts—Tapassa and Bhalluka, two merchants from Orissa who happened to pass by. Shortly afterwards Buddha went to Benares and began his life-long mission; but, after sending out his 60 disciples to preach to the people, he returned to Uruvilva. Here he converted three brothers, hermits with matted hair who worshipped fire, known as Uruvilvā Kāsyapa, Nadi Kāsyapa, and Gayā Kāsyapa, together with 1,000 Brahmins who were their disciples. Accompanied by these, he went to the Gayasitta

Hill, where he preached his "burning" sermon on the fires of the passions. In this fire sermon which is said to have been suggested by a fire seen from the rocky crest of the hill, Buddha gave a key to the meaning of Nirvāna. He pointed out that all things are burning with the fires of the passions and lusts, and that a wise man, becoming weary of the world of sense, frees himself from passion. When free he realizes that his object is accomplished, that he has lived a life of restraint and chastity, and that re-birth is ended. In this way, Buddha, comparing all life to a flame, brought home to his hearers the duty of extinguishing the fire of lust, and with it the fire of existence, and impressed upon them the importance of monkhood and celibacy for the accomplishment of that object. After staying for some time near Gayāsīrsa, Buddha wended his way with his numerous followers to the court of king Biubisāra at Rājagriha. Henceforward he passes away from the scene of the great consummation, and the record of his life in this district is confined to the neighbourhood of Yashtivana, where we are told that he displayed great spiritual wonders for the sake of the *Devas* and expounded the law for three months.

The detailed descriptions which the Chinese pilgrims have left of the *topographia sacra* of Gayā have enabled many of the sites visited by Buddha to be traced with some certainty. The name of Uruvilvā has been perpetuated in the name Urel, a village close to Bodh Gayā; on the Dhongra Hill some 2½ miles from the great temple of Bodh Gayā, a cave marks the place on the Prāgbodhi mountain where Buddha was warned that he must not stay; and pilgrims still worship at Mucharin, the spot where Buddha was sheltered by the snake-king Muchilinda. Brahmajuni, the rugged hill towering above the town of Gaya, has been identified with the hill called Gayāsīrsa; Jethian is the modern name of Yashtivana; and, close by, Tapoban with its hot springs marks the spot where the master walked for exercise. An account of these places will be found in Chapter XIX, and the present chapter will be devoted to the history of Bodh Gayā, the Gayā of enlightenment, or as it is sometimes called Buddha Gayā, the Gayā of Buddha, or Mahābodhi, the great enlightenment—a name which is also given to the *Bodhidrūma* or sacred *pīpal*-tree.

HISTORY
OF
BODH
GAYA.

Early
history.

It was under this tree that Sākya Muni attained Buddhahood; it is the most sacred of sites to Buddhists, and worship has consequently centred round it from the earliest period of Buddhism. The tree became celebrated as the tree of enlightenment, and is now the most sacred symbol of the Buddhists, who regard it as many Christians do the cross. In the 3rd century B.C. Asoka built a monastery and erected a temple near it, giving 100,000 pieces of gold for the building. One of the bas-reliefs of the Bharhut stūpa (2nd century B.C.) gives a representation of the tree and its surroundings as they then were. It shows a *pīpal*-tree, with a stone platform in front, adorned with umbrellas and garlands, and surrounded by a building with arched windows resting on pillars, while close to it stood a single pillar with a Persepolitan capital crowned with the figure of an elephant.

From a Burmese inscription found in the residence of the Mahanth of Bodh Gayā we know that this temple became ruinous with lapse of time and was replaced by another, identified by General Cunningham* with the present temple, which, in his opinion, was built on the site of that erected by Asoka and was set up during the rule of the Indo-Scythian kings in the 2nd century A.D., though other authorities attribute it to the 5th century A.D. In the reign of Samudra Gupta a great monastery was constructed close to this temple by the Cingalese about the year 330 A.D. This monastery was built by Meghavarna, the Buddhist king of Ceylon, in consequence of the complaints made by two monks whom he had sent to do homage to the Diamond Throne and to visit the monastery built by Asoka at Bodh Gayā. On their return, they informed the king that they could find no place where they could stay in comfort, and the king resolved to found a monastery where his subjects could reside when on pilgrimage. An embassy was sent to Samudra Gupta and the required permission having been given, Meghavarna erected a splendid monastery to the north of the Bodhī tree. This building, which was three storeys in height, included six halls, was adorned with three towers, and surrounded by a strong wall 30 or 40 feet high. The decorations were executed in rich colours with high artistic skill, the statue of Buddha,

* Mahābādhi, from which the account of Bodh Gayā is mainly derived.

cast in gold and silver, was studded with gems, and the subsidiary stūpas, enshrining relics of Buddha himself, were worthy of the principal edifice. About 600 A.D. Sasānka, the king of Central Bengal, who was a worshipper of Siva and a fanatical enemy of Buddhism, dug up and burnt the Bodhi tree, but it was replanted by Purnavarman, king of Magadha, who surrounded it with a wall in order to prevent it being cut down again. When Hiuen Tsiang visited the place in the first half of the 7th century, it was a young and vigorous tree, the temple was intact, and its precincts were crowded with hundreds of stūpas and *chaityas* erected by kings, princes and other great personages.

After this we have the records of the erection of several minor temples and of the dedication of statues at various periods down to the flourishing period of the Pāla kings in the 9th and 10th centuries. Under the rule of these Buddhist kings, the stream of Chinese pilgrimage, which had been so great in the 7th century during the reign of the powerful Buddhist monarch, Harsha Vardhana, again set in, and the sacred tree was visited by numbers of Chinese pilgrims, who have left many memorials of their visits. In the 11th century two missions were sent over to Bodh Gayā by the Burmese king, first in 1035 and then again in 1079, and the temple, which had fallen out of repair, was completely restored between the years 1079—86 A.D. The Buddhist religion appears to have fallen on evil times in the 12th century, and there is a noticeable absence of inscriptions and votive offerings. A number of works, however, were carried out by Asokavalla, king of Sapādalaksha, *i.e.*, Siwalik, either a northern kingdom including the hill country of Kumāon and Garhwāl or the whole of Northern Rājputāna: indeed, one inscription found in Gayā expressly states that an appeal was made to him in consequence of the decay of the law of Buddha.

At the end of the 12th century the whole country was desolated by the Muhammadan invasion; and though Bodh Gayā is not mentioned in the records of their ravages, it seems very unlikely that it escaped when the great monastery at Bihār was sacked and its monks were slain. The gilt copper umbrella, containing a record of the first Burmese mission, which was found carefully hidden underground when the temple was restored, was probably buried at this time, when everything of

Medieval
history.

value that was not secreted must have been either carried off or destroyed; and to the savage iconoclasm of the invaders must be due the many headless and broken statues found here. But though the monastery was sacked and desolate, pilgrims continued to visit the shrine, and we find records showing their presence in the early years of the 14th century. These poor pilgrims however were no longer able to build temples or dedicate stūpas as their predecessors had done, and their records are limited to rough sketches of themselves and their offerings boldly scratched on the granite pavement slabs of the temple. General Cunningham considers that from this time both the holy *pīpal*-tree and the temple were appropriated by the Brāhmans, though he gives no arguments in favour of this view, except the finding of a round stone (originally the dome of a stūpa), which formerly stood in front of the temple, with the feet of Vishnu carved on its face and a date corresponding to 1308 A.D. inscribed on its side. In any case, however, the place must have fallen under Brahmanical influence with the downfall of Buddhism, though it was still visited and has been visited up to the present day by Buddhist pilgrims performing Buddhist rites.

Except for these intermittent visits, the temple stood deserted during the 6 centuries following the Muhammadan conquest, and gradually became more and more ruinous. At the end of the 16th century a Hindu ascetic, attracted by the sylvan solitude of the place, came and settled near the temple and founded a *math* or monastery of the Hindu sect of Girs, one of the seven Saivite orders established by Sankara Achārjya. About the year 1727 the then Mahanth or abbot of the monastery received by royal *farmān* from the Mughal Emperor, Muhammad Shāh, the grant of the village of Tārādih, where the ruins of the temple stood, and thus acquired possession of the shrine. In spite of this circumstance, the temple was not used for worship by the Hindus; it was neglected and slowly but steadily crumbled away. In 1811 Buchanan Hamilton described it as "in the last stages of decay compatible with anything like a preservation of original form;" on the ground-floor was "a monstrous mis-shapen daub of clay," with a motley row of images taken from the ruins and built in front of it so as to hide part of the deity; the sacred *pīpal*-tree was still an object of worship and frequented by the pilgrims of

Gayā, but a stair had been built on the outside of the temple, "so that the orthodox may pass up without entering the porch and thus seeing the hateful image of Buddha."

In the early part of the 19th century archaeologists began to make enquiries into the history of Bodh Gayā, and it was visited by a Burmese mission in 1833; but it was not till 1884 that the ruins were restored. In 1876 Mindoon Min, king of Burma, being anxious to restore the temple and to construct a building on the adjacent ground for the accommodation of a number of Buddhist priests who wished to settle there for the performance of religious service at the shrine, obtained the permission of the Government of India to depute a party of Burmese officials and workmen for the purpose. It soon appeared however that this work was being done without due regard to archaeological fitness, and, after an investigation made by Dr. Rājendralala Mitra, Government took the work of restoration into its own hands and completed it in 1884 at a cost of two lakhs. Government placed the building which they had thus restored under the Public Works Department and appointed an overseer as custodian of the temple. They have undertaken and paid for such repairs as have been found necessary ever since, and have also kept in repair the adjoining Burmese rest-house, which was originally built from Burmese subscriptions.

Modern
history.

Of late years the Buddhists have been endeavouring to recover this ancient shrine, one of the objects of the Mahābodhi Society, which was founded by Buddhists of Ceylon in 1891, being to secure possession of the Bodh Gayā temple for the Buddhists. In 1893 an endeavour was made on behalf of the Society to obtain a lease or conveyance of the temple from the Mahanth of Bodh Gayā; and on the failure of these negotiations, the Secretary of the Society invoked the assistance of the Bengal Government, but was informed that Government could take no measures for the furtherance of the general objects of the Society, and that there was perfect freedom of worship for all Buddhists at Bodh Gayā. In the same year the Secretary had been entrusted, when in Japan, with an historical image of Buddha for enshrinement in the temple, and in 1895 he proceeded to place the image in the temple without permission. This action was resented by the disciples of the Mahanth, and a

disturbance ensued which resulted in the removal of the image * and the expulsion of those who were enshrining it. A protracted criminal prosecution followed, which ended in the conviction of some disciples of the Mahanth in the local Courts; but they were acquitted by the High Court on appeal, on the ground that it was not established that the complainant and his companions were lawfully engaged in religious worship when they were disturbed, and that the accused had therefore committed no offence under section 296, Indian Penal Code. The Mahanth's position in regard to the temple was discussed at length in the various judgments recorded in the course of these proceedings; and the High Court found that the Mahanth was in possession, was sole superintendent of the temple, and took all the offerings both of Hindus and Buddhists. They stated, however, that it might be conceded that the Mahabodhi temple was a Buddhist temple, that, although it had been in the possession of Hindu Mahanths, it had never been converted into a Hindu temple in the sense that Hindu idols have been enshrined or orthodox Hindu worship carried on there, and that Buddhist pilgrims had had free access and full liberty to worship in it. At the same time, they observed that the evidence showed that since July 1894 the Mahanth and his disciples had been carrying on a sort of spurious Hindu worship of the great image of Buddha on the altar of the ground-floor, and that the image had been dressed in a way that made it repugnant to Buddhist worshippers. These proceedings in the criminal courts produced much irritation and bitterness between the two sects. The attempt to place the image in the temple was regarded by the Hindus as being intended to assert and establish a right to the building, and they have consequently become less tolerant. The Buddhists have not ceased to press for larger privileges and to complain of the present state of affairs, and on the other hand the Mahanth has continued to assert his authority and his right to control the worship.

The present position of affairs is somewhat anomalous. The temple was originally a Buddhist shrine, but for a long time past has been in the possession of a Hindu Mahanth

* The image is now in the Burmese rest-house to the west of the temple.

belonging to an order founded by one of the bitterest enemies of Buddhism. It had fallen into complete ruin and would soon have disappeared had not Government restored it at its own cost; in consequence, they maintain a custodian for the care of the building and see to its repairs. The Mahanth controls the worship and receives the offerings made by Buddhists and Hindu pilgrims, Government maintaining an attitude of impartiality on all religious questions affecting the shrine. The Buddhists perform the rites of their religion at the shrine and under the Bodhi tree, just as Buddhists of different countries have done for centuries past, but Hindus also make offerings under the tree, as it is recognized as one of the 45 *redis* or places which Hindus visit while performing the religious ceremonies for the salvation of their ancestors which centre round the holy city of Gayā. This Hindu reverence for the tree is very old, but side by side with it there is a Hindu cult of very recent growth, as Hindu worship, which has been pronounced to be of a spurious and unorthodox character, is offered at the shrine itself.

In its main features the present temple represents the structure as it must have existed as early as 635 A.D., when the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsiang, saw it. It consists of a main tower, rising to the height of 180 feet, in the form of a slender pyramid which springs from a square platform, on the four corners of which are similar towers of smaller size. The outside walls have niches for the reception of statues, and access to the temple is obtained through an eastern gate supported by pillars, which opens on to an ante-room in front of the sanctum. At the western wall of the sanctum is an altar upon which is placed the principal image, a large mediæval statue of Buddha with various other images on each side. The main figure has been gilded over, and the Hindu custodians of the shrine have marked its forehead with the sectarian mark of the Vaishnavas, in order to represent it as the Buddha incarnation of Vishnu. In the upper floor another chamber contains a statue known as Māyā Devi, the mother of Buddha. The features of the temple described by Hiuen Tsiang correspond so clearly with that of the present structure that there can be little doubt that the shrine he visited is the same as that

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The temple.

now standing. He described it as built of bluish bricks with a facing of plaster; in the four faces were several tiers of niches, each containing a gilded statue of Buddha; the walls were covered with beautiful sculptures, festoons of pearls and figures of *rishis*; and the architraves, pillars, doors and windows were ornamented with gold and silver chasing, in which pearls and precious stones were inserted. The magnificent adornments of the temple and the hundreds of images enshrined in the niches have long since disappeared, but otherwise the structure is the same. Its dimensions correspond with those described by Hiuen Tsiang, it is built of blue bricks with a coating of plaster, and the four faces present several tiers of niches rising one above the other; in some of these Buddhist figures were found as late as the time of restoration, and even the entrance on the east side was found to be a later addition, as stated by the Chinese pilgrim.

The discoveries made during the restoration show that this temple was built over Asoka's temple, and some remains of the latter were, in fact, found in the course of the excavations. A throne of polished sandstone was discovered with four short pilasters in front, just as in the Bharhut bas-relief; two Persepolitan pillar bases of Asoka's age were found flanking it; and the remains of old walls were laid bare under the basement of the present temple. When this restoration was undertaken, the temple court was covered with the accumulated debris of ages and with deposits of sand left by the floods of the river Nilajan. The courtyard was cleared, the temple completely restored, the portico over the eastern door and the four pavilions flanking the pyramid were rebuilt, and the great granite Toran gateway to the east, which dates back to the 4th or 5th century, was again set up. The model used in restoring the temple was a small stone model of the temple as it existed in mediæval times, from which the design * of the building as it then existed could be traced with some certainty. The

* In his "Lhasa and its Mysteries" Lieutenant-Colonel Waddell gives an interesting comparison between the temple as it was before restoration and the great pagoda by the side of the temple at Gyantse in Tibet, which is locally known as the Gandhola, the old Indian title of the Bodhi Gayâ temple, and which is said to be a model of that temple transplanted to Tibet.

work has been subjected to much adverse criticism, from which it might be presumed that visitors would find a temple robbed of its age and beauty, with a scene of havoc around it. The reverse is the case; the temple has been repaired as effectively and successfully as funds would permit, and the site has been excavated in a manner which will bear comparison with the best modern work elsewhere. Rising from the sunken courtyard, the temple still rears its lofty head, a monument worthy of the ancient religion it represents; the Vajrasan

... general history. It was first cut down by Asoka in his unregenerate days, but after he became a believer in the law of Buddha he lavished an inordinate devotion upon it. His queen, jealous of this attachment and grudging the jewels which Asoka offered to the tree, again had it cut down; but for a second time it was miraculously restored to life. The intense veneration in which the tree was held even at this early date is shown by the gorgeous ceremonies which took place when a branch was transported to Ceylon in the reign of Asoka. From the Buddhist chronicles we learn that the whole way from Patna to Bodh Gayā was cleared and decorated, and that a splendid urn of solid gold was made for the reception of the sacred shoot. The Emperor himself, attended by a long train of elephants, chariots, horse and foot, escorted the urn to the tree, which its votaries had enriched with all manner of gifts. Gems sparkled from among its leaves, rows of flags and streamers waved from its branches, and it was laden with fragrant blossoms, the offerings of devotees. After elaborate ceremonies, a branch was lopped off, placed in the urn, and then escorted with much pomp to the coast. A bas-relief on the eastern gateway at Sanchi portrays the scene. In the middle is seen the Bodhi tree with Asoka's temple rising half-way up it. A procession with musicians is carved on both sides, and to the right a royal person, perhaps

Asoka, is dismounting from his horse with the help of a dwarf. Above is another sculpture which shows a small Bodhi tree in a pot and a long procession on its way to a towered city.

For a third time it was destroyed by Sasānka, who cut it down, dug up its roots, and burnt it with fire, in order that not a trace of it might be left. Soon afterwards it was restored by Purnavarman, who followed his great ancestor Asoka in his devotion to Buddhism; and a wonderful account is given of miraculous resuscitation. In a single night the tree sprang up to a height of 10 feet, and then, fearing that it might again be cut down, the king surrounded it with a wall of stone 24 feet high, by which General Cunningham understands that the new tree was placed on the terrace of the temple, which is over 30 feet above the original ground level. When Buchanan Hamilton visited the temple in 1811, he found the tree in full vigour, but judged that it could not be more than 100 years old. By 1875 this tree had become completely decayed, and in 1876 it was blown down during a storm. Many seeds however had been collected, and one of the offshoots of the parent tree was ready to take its place and was planted.

There can be little doubt that the same expedient has been followed ever since the tree obtained its sanctity, and that the present tree is a lineal descendant of that under which Buddha obtained perfect wisdom. It was destroyed several times, and, though the Buddhist chroniclers have concealed the fact by miraculous accounts of the way in which it was restored on each occasion, there can be little doubt that the life of the tree was perpetuated by dropping a seed in a fork or hollow of the dying trunk. The *pīpal* is a quick-growing tree, and there must have been a long succession of fresh trees raised from seed of the parent tree from the time of Asoka down to the present day. In 1861 traces were found of a succession of platforms below the high terrace on which the tree then stood, and in 1880 General Cunningham found two large pieces of an old *pīpal*-tree 3 feet below the level of the Diamond throne and 30 feet below the level of this terrace. As the whole mass of the buttress at the back of the temple had been standing on this spot for more than 12 centuries, General Cunningham considered it not improbable that these two fragments might be part of the tree which was cut down by Sasānka in the beginning of the 7th century.

The Diamond
throne.

Under the Bodhi tree is a sandstone slab known as the Vajrāsana or Diamond throne, which still retains its original position of Buddha's seat (*Bodhimanda*) and the reputed centre of the universe. It derives its name from the fact that it is regarded as having stability, indestructibility and capacity of resisting all worldly shocks. The throne consists of a polished slab of grey sandstone with a surface carved with geometrical patterns, circular in the middle, with a double border of squares. All the four outer faces are richly carved with pigeons, conventional flowers* and the geese of Asoka's pillar capitals. General Cunningham is of opinion that it must have been exposed to view on all four sides in an open building, and once formed the upper slab of the sandstone throne inside Asoka's temple. It rests on a brick platform ornamented with boldly moulded figures of men and lions; and judging from the round faces, full lips and easy pose of the figures, General Cunningham assigns the pedestal to the time of the later Indo-Scythian or earlier Gupta kings. In the middle of one of the faces the restorers found a ball of clay enclosing a rich treasure, which helped to fix the date of the temple, as it contained gold impressions of a coin of Kuvishka, who was a liberal patron of Buddhist ecclesiastical institutions in the latter half of the 2nd century A.D. This treasure included gold flowers studded with sapphires, shells of gold, pearls, coral, crystal, sapphires, rubies and emeralds; and even the plaster of the throne was composed of powdered coral, mixed with sapphires, crystal, pearl and ivory, and bound together with lime. The throne itself should probably be ascribed to the time of Asoka, as the geese and other conventional ornaments are exactly the same as those found on the capitals of the Asoka pillars.

Dr. Rājendralāla Mitra† was of opinion that the true Diamond throne was the massive chlorite slab which has rested for many years in a shed to the east of the shrine, known as the temple of Vāgeswarī Devī. "This stone, which is to be removed to the temple precincts, is a circular blue slab streaked with whitish

* Lt.-Colonel Waddell points out that the plinth of the throne of the Grand Lāma in the Potala at Lhāsa is "ornamented with the same simple diaper-worked flowers like marguerites." See *Lhāsa and its Mysteries*, p. 391.

† *Buddha Gayā*, pp. 142-144.

veins, the surface of which is covered with concentric circles of various minute ornaments, the second circle being composed of conventional thunderbolts (*vajra*), and the third being a wavy scroll filled with figures of men and animals. These circles occupy a breadth of 15 inches, leaving in the centre a plain circle, inside which is a square. General Cunningham, however, believes that this is the stone described by Hiuen Tsiang as "a blue stone with wonderful marks upon it and strangely figured," which stood before a large *vikāra* to the west of the Bodhi tree. This stone was the seven-gemmed throne made by Indra on which Buddha sat after his enlightenment, but the Chinese pilgrim added sadly:—"From the time of the Holy One till the present is so long that the gems have turned into stone."

The Asoka railing.

The ancient stone railing containing the pillars mentioned above certainly belongs for the greater part to the time of Asoka's reign, and forms one of the oldest sculptured monuments in India. According to Hiuen Tsiang, Asoka surrounded the Bodhi tree with a stone wall 10 feet high, and this measurement corresponds with the height (9 feet 10 inches) of the pillars still existing, while the pillars themselves bear inscriptions in Asoka characters. The enclosure of Asoka's temple was 250 feet in extent with 64 pillars, whereas the circuit of the present railing is not less than 520 feet, which would have required double the number of pillars; and it appears therefore that the original railing of Asoka was re-arranged and its circuit enlarged to suit the greater dimensions of the surrounding enclosure of the great temple which replaced Asoka's chapel. The remains of 62 of the pillars of this greater enclosure are *in situ*, a large number being of granite and the remainder of fine sandstone; about half a dozen more have been removed to Kensington and the Indian Museum at Calcutta; and 23 more, which have until recently been in the various courts of the *math* at Bodh Gayā, are to be restored to their proper place round the temple.

The pillars of the railing have been replaced as far as possible, and the original design can still be traced. The inner faces of the coping stones are ornamented with long strings of animals, some natural and others quite fabulous, such as winged horses and fish-tailed elephants, lions and rams; the outer faces are decorated with continuous bands of flowers. The carved rail-

bars, which are fitted into almond-shaped holes in the sides of the pillars, are ornamented on both sides with circular bosses or medallions containing capitals of pillars, flowers, and kings' busts. The pillars themselves have at the top and bottom of each face semi-circular medallions containing half flowers or small scenes of various kinds, and in the middle of each face there is a full circular medallion ornamented in the same way. The sculptures are vigorously carved, the variety of subjects represented being astonishing; some have only figures such as crocodiles, winged horses, grotesque faces, kings' heads, and lotus flowers, while one curious figure is somewhat like a mermaid; others, which represent scenes of ordinary life, might have been carved at the present time, such as a boat being poled through a mass of lotus leaves and a ploughing scene in which a pair of bullocks draw the plough. Others again portray mythical or religious subjects. The Bodhi tree is shown adorned with umbrellas and garlands; on another medallion the *dharmachakra* or Wheel of the Law is set up on a throne with two attendants in the act of worship; a *Deva* is represented flying over the battlements of a city, with a garland in his outstretched hand, towards a Bodhi tree before which a man is kneeling in adoration; and on a pillar near the south-east corner there is a full length mutilated figure of a Yakshini clinging to a tree with her foot supported by a male figure. One of the best preserved shows the householder Anāthapindika and his servants covering the whole surface of the Jetavana garden at Srāvasti with square golden coins, while a servant comes up to them with a basket full of more coins. In another, showing the famous Kalpadrūma or wishing-tree, two arms are seen extended from the tree, one holding a plate with food and the other a pitcher towards a man who is stretching out his arm to receive them; in another Indra's harper stands before the Indrasilā cave in which Buddha's seat can be seen. The most interesting, however, of all the sculptures is on a pillar which has recently been removed from the adjoining Hindu monastery. It shows a figure of the sun-god standing on his chariot drawn by four horses, with two attendants shooting arrows to right and left, and is clearly an adoption of similar types of the Greek Apollo.

The only other remains now extant of so early a period are the bases of some columns on a brick wall about 3 feet high to

the north of the temple. These mark the promenade where Buddha walked for 7 days after the great consummation, and where flowers sprung up beneath his feet; they are the sole traces left of the Jewelled Cloister, a long pavilion covering the path which Buddha once trod, the columns of which were hung with garlands of flowers and strings of jewels. Twenty-two pillared bases are still *in situ*, each marked with a letter of the Indian alphabet of Asoka.

Stūpas.

To the visitor unacquainted with Buddhist countries one of the most interesting sights at Bodh Gayā is the vast number of stūpas ranged round the temple in the sunken courtyard. It was the custom of Buddhist pilgrims to leave as memorials of their visits stūpas, which varied in size and magnificence with the wealth of the votaries. Hiuen Tsiang has left it on record that the precincts were crowded with them, and during the excavations made at the time of restoring the temple thousands of stūpas of all sizes were found, some built of stones and bricks, others great monoliths; others again, whose number could be counted in hundreds of thousands, were small clay stūpas, from 2 or 3 inches in height to the size of a walnut, which would appear to have been the number of offerings of poor pilgrims who could afford no more. As the soil silted up and the level of the courtyard rose, later stūpas were built over the tops of the earlier ones in successive tiers of different ages, and temples were found standing on broken stūpas, and stūpas resting upon ruined temples. So great was the number of these successive monuments, and so rapid the accumulation of earth and stones, that the general level of the courtyard was raised about 20 feet above the floor of the temple. A great number have been set up again in the courtyard, and here the memorials of pilgrims of different ages can still be seen, beginning with rude, rough monoliths of early periods, and ending with the tall ornamented spire of the mediæval ages, surmounting a dome with an elaborately carved basement. The earlier stūpas appear to have been crowned with umbrellas of stone or copper gilt, but were severely simple and unadorned; in the later ones the dome, which was originally the principal feature of the stūpa, became a mere top, below which figures of Buddha were placed in rows of niches, and the umbrella above the dome became

The great statue of Buddha which is enshrined in the sanctuary on the lower floor of the temple was set up during the restoration to replace a brick and mortar statue which had been placed there by the Burmese. By far the greatest number of the figures of Buddha represent him seated under the Bodhi tree, but the ancient examples are very few, and nearly the whole of the sculptured figures belong to the mediæval period and are not earlier than the period of the Pála kings (800—1200 A. D.). They belong to the latest phase of Buddhism and afford a striking illustration of what that religion had become before its final overthrow.

Statues.

Scarcely more than one quarter of the old site has been excavated; but, as far as can be judged from the present state of the ruins, the entire area of the main enclosure of the temple has been laid open. It was filled with an enormous amount of smaller shrines, *chaityas*, votive stúpas and the like, the foundations of which are still extant. South of the temple is an old tank, called *Buddha-pokhar*, which may be the tank excavated by the brother of the Bráhmaṇ who is said to have built the temple, and north-west, at a place now called Amar Singh's fort, remains of the ancient monastery mentioned above have been discovered. Very little of these remains can, however, be seen at present, and here as in other places further excavation on a systematic scale may yield valuable results. It is possible also that many treasures may be found in the local *math*, as the neighbourhood of the temple was probably the quarry for the materials used in constructing it. It has been the receptacle for many fine statues and is known to contain remains of archaeological and historical interest. From this monastery the great image of Buddha was brought to its place in the sanctum; some of the pillars of the Asoka railing until recently supported a verandah inside it; a long Sanskrit inscription was found here in the ground with a hole bored in it, on which the lower tenon of a gate played; and here too were found the Burmese inscription recording the restoration of the temple in 1709—86 A.D. and a Chinese inscription of the same century recording the erection of a Pagoda near the Diamond throne by the command of the Chinese Emperor.

Other remains.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GAYA PILGRIMAGE.

SANCTITY OF
GAYA.

GAYA is one of the great places of pilgrimage in India and has especial sanctity in the eyes of Hindus. It is their belief that it is incumbent on every Hindu to visit Gayā and there make offerings for the souls of his ancestors. By so doing, the spirits of the deceased obtain deliverance from hell and admission to the paradise of Vishnu, while their descendants themselves acquire personal merit and absolution from some of the deadliest sins of the Hindu code. From the moment the pilgrim starts from his home, the deliverance of his ancestors begins; he is said to be making a ladder to heaven for them and himself; and the offerings at the holy sites crowded in and round Gayā assure their salvation and his own blessing. To save the spirits of the dead from torment is the first duty of a son, and the performance of the *śrāddha* or funeral ceremonies at Gayā is regarded as a certain means to secure that end.

The Gayā
legend.

The sanctity of Gayā is based on a legend contained in the Gayā Mahātmya, which forms part of the Vāyu Purāna. This legend relates that a giant demon, named Gayā Asura, performed a rigid penance for a thousand years. The gods, anxiously fearing that they could give no sufficient recompense for his piety, came to him and asked what reward he wanted; his request that he might be the holiest of all things was granted, with the result that all who saw or touched him went to Heaven. Yama, the God of Hell, finding that he was monarch of an empty realm, appealed to the gods. They persuaded Gayā Asura to allow a sacrifice to be performed on his body; the sacrifice (*jajna*) was accordingly performed, but the demon was not yet laid. Yama then brought a sacred rock from his home, which he placed on the demon's head, and all the gods sat on his body, but still the demon moved. At last Vishnu was called in; he struck

Gayā with his club and removed with this blow, as the account cuphemistically has it, all his fatigue and pain. Gayā Asura begged as a last boon that the gods should abide for all time on his body, and that this should be the holiest of spots within the limits of which all men might obtain salvation by offering *srāddha*. His prayer was granted, and his body became the holy ground of Gayā.

At the time of this great sacrifice Brahmā, seeing that the Brāhmins refused to accept the offerings, incarnated the Gayā-wal Brāhmins in fourteen gotras to assist in the sacrifice. On its completion he made them gifts of mountains of silver and gold, and tanks and rivers of milk and honey, on the one condition that they should never accept gifts for *srāddha*. Yama, however, after performing *srāddha*, gave them gifts of gold and jewels secreted in betel-leaves. Brahmā therefore cursed them, and their mountains turned to stone, their rivers and tanks to water. They threw themselves on Brahmā's mercy; in pity, he promised that, though the precious mountains and rivers were for ever lost, they should have their one means of livelihood in the gifts of devotees who performed *srāddha* at Gayā, and that, though void of knowledge and learning, they should be respected and worshipped by all.

In this legend Dr. Rājendralāla Mitra* finds an allegory of the triumph of Brahmanism over Buddhism, and points to the similarity between the character of Gayā Asura and the practice of Buddhism as it appeared to Hindus. He argues that the benevolent demon, like the Buddhists, made salvation too easy a matter, and was therefore an enemy to Brahmanism, while the followers of Buddha were as pious and self-mortifying as the Asura, and like him did away with Brahmanism and all sacrifice. The distance covered by Gayā's body is, he considers, perhaps an allusion to the area over which Buddhism obtained, the crushing of the good devil represents an appeal to force, and the rock placed on his head corresponds in extent to the present Gayā. Analogy is found in similar legends, such as that of the ogre Mochana, who tried to force his way into the assembly of the gods at Benares, and had almost entered the city, when its guardian, Bhairo Nāth smashed his head in with his club. The demon

* Buddha Gayā, pp. 10—18.

prayed that, as he was so near success, Mahādeo should allow him a place in the holy city ; the prayer was granted and the demon deified. Here, too, it has been held that the story of the struggle points to a religious strife between Brahmanism and Buddhism, which ended in a compromise, the latter religion not being entirely rooted out, but incorporated in Brahmanism.

Another fact which lends support to this theory is that the same legend is current in the distant Province of Orissa, once, like Gayā, a noted centre of Buddhism. Writing in 1822, Stirling* says in his description of Jājpur, a town in the district of Cuttack : " Jājipur is further esteemed from its being supposed to rest on the navel of the tremendous giant or demon, called the Gayā Asur, who was overthrown by Vishnu. Such was his bulk that when stretched on the ground, his head rested at Gayā, his navel (*nabhi*) at this place, and his feet at a spot near Rajamendri. There is a very sacred well or pit within the enclosure of one of the Jājipur temples, called the Gayā Nābhi or Bamphi, which is fabled to reach to the navel of the monster, and into it the Hindu pilgrims throw the *Pinda*, or cake of rice, and sweetmeats, which is offered at particular conjunctions as an expiation for the sins of their ancestors." Here too it is said that Brahmā performed a great sacrifice, importing a vast number of Brāhmins from Kanauj to officiate, and this great *jajna* is perpetuated in the name of the town. The king with whose name the revival of Brahmanism in Orissa is usually associated had his capital at Jājpur, and leaving aside the mythical element, there is good reason for believing that he imported a number of pure Brāhmins from Kanauj, the stronghold of Brahmanism in Northern India, with the object of reviving the Brahmanical faith and of supplanting the Buddhism which had a firm hold on the country. The similarity between the legends attaching to the two towns is at least very striking, and it may well be that in both places they point to the former prevalence of Buddhism and to its assimilation with the triumphant cult of Brahmanism.

There is at any rate no doubt that the sanctity of Gayā as a pilgrim city dates back to an early age, and that it was visited by Hindu pilgrims even under the rule of the Pāla kings, when Buddhism still had its royal patrons and was in a flourishing

The antiquity
of Gayā pil-
grimage.

* An Account of Orissa Proper or Cuttack, by A. Stirling.

condition. The evidence of inscriptions is particularly valuable in this respect, as they show clearly that the sacred *śrēṭhas* or places of pilgrimages at Gayā existed at a date long anterior to the time when the present temples were erected, and that Gayā was known as a pilgrim city at least as early as the 10th century * A.D. An inscription of that century near the Akshayabat or undying fig-trees mentions the tree, and shows that it was then one of the *vedīs* or holy sites visited by pilgrims. In another unpublished inscription Vajrapānī, the Governor of Nayapāla (1060 A.D.), boasts of raising Gayā from a small place into an Amrāvati (city of Indra); and it may be conjectured that at this time the Gayāwāls developed their organization and regulated the worship. A third inscription† of later date throws more light on the Gayā pilgrimage. This inscription records a pilgrimage to Gayā which some Rājput minister, apparently from the north-west, undertook in 1242; and to commemorate its accomplishment the pilgrim says: "I have done Gayā. Witness thereof is Prapitāmaha." A statement of this kind, technically known as Sākshī-Srāvana, is incumbent on every pilgrim either at the end of his offerings at each *vedī* he has to visit, or at the completion of the whole pilgrimage, when he invokes the gods as witnesses that by completing the prescribed rites he has freed himself from the debts he owes his ancestors. In the ritual observed at the present day the Akshayabat and the temple of Prapitāmahesvara are the last spots visited by the pilgrims; and, as this record refers to the deity of the temple where the pilgrimage now ends, it seems clear that in one important point at least, the ritual observed at Gayā some 650 years ago was exactly the same as it is at the present day.

The first ceremony to be observed by the pilgrim is to shave at the river Pūnpūn, and on arrival at Gayā itself he is conducted

THE PILGRIM'S
AGE.

* Mahāmahopādhyāya Hara Prasād Sāstri informs me that it is probable that Gayā did not acquire a pan-Indian celebrity before this time, and points out that Gayā is not mentioned among the great places of pilgrimage in the sloka—*Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Māyā, Kāsi, Kānchi, Avantika, Purī, Dvāravati, chīva saptaitāh moksha layikāḥ*, i.e., these seven are the givers of salvation, Ayodhā, Mathurā, Māyā, Kāsi, Kānchi, Avanti and the city of Dvārakā. This couplet was composed probably in the 8th century A.D., and from the absence of any mention of Gayā, it appears that any importance it may have had then, was only local.

† Report Arch. Surv. Bengal Circle for 1901-2.

before the Gayāwāl who is his family priest, and worships his feet. The Gayā *srāddha* then begins, and the pilgrim visits, if he is piously inclined, and has time and money to spare, all the 45 *vedis*, which lie within the holy ground extending for some 15 miles between the Pretsilā Hill on the north and Bodh Gayā on the south, and which centre in Gayā itself. It is absolutely essential, however, to offer *pindas* or balls of rice to the spirits of the dead in three places, viz., at the Phalgu river, the Viṣṇupad temple, and the Akshayabat or undying fig-tree. The Phalgu is said to be the embodiment of Vishnu itself, and is also peculiarly associated with *srāddha* ceremonies, as Sita here offered a *pinda* of sand, in default of rice, to the spirit of Dasaratha, the father of Rāma. Here the pilgrim begins his round by a *sankalpa*, i.e., a vow to perform all the rites duly, and this is followed by *tarpana*, or homage offered to the spirits of the departed, with water, *kusa* grass and sesamum seed. Then comes the full *srāddha* with balls of rice or barley-flour mixed with milk, water, flowers, sandal-wood, betel-leaves, etc., and small lighted lamps. The rites of bathing, *tarpana* and *pindadān* are repeated, one or more of them, at all the *vedis* subsequently visited. The Viṣṇupad temple in the heart of old Gayā is one of the most sacred of all the Vaishnava temples in India; most of the later Sāstras enjoin that no one should fail to visit this holy spot at least once in his life-time; and in one of the Smritis the wish for numerous offspring is commended on the ground that one of the many sons may visit Gayā and rescue his father from the horrors of hell by performing *srāddha* on the sacred imprint of Vishnu's feet. The outline of these foot-prints are still to be seen, encased in silver on a large granite stone with an uneven top, which is much worn with the frequent washings it daily undergoes. The third of the three *vedis* which no pilgrim may omit is the Akshayabat tree. Coming to this at the end of his pilgrimage he offers *pindas* to the spirits of his ancestors and gifts to the Gayāwāl, before whom he prostrates himself in worship. The Gayāwāl touches him on the back and blesses him by pronouncing the word "*Suphal*," assuring him thereby that his worship has been "fruitful," i.e., that he has secured salvation for his ancestors and blessings for himself. The gifts (*dakṣhinā*) which are the Gayāwāl's due having been paid and this blessing received, he is

presented by the Gayāwāl with sweetmeats and a garland of sacred flowers as *prashādi*, he has the *tilak* mark placed on his forehead, and is free to go away in peace.

As regards the actual ceremonies observed, the following account written by Monier Williams,* which gives an interesting description of the rites, may be quoted:—"A party consisting of six men and one Gayāwāl entered one of the colonnades of the temple and seated themselves on their heels in a line, with the officiating priest at their head. Twelve Pindas were formed of rice and milk, not much larger than the large marbles used by boys. They were placed with sprigs of the sacred Tulasi plant in small earthen-ware p'atters. Then on the top of the Pindas were scattered Kusa grass and flowers. I was told that the Pindas in the present case were typical of the bodies of the twelve ancestors for whom the Srāddha was celebrated. The men had Kusa grass twisted round their fingers, to purify their hands for the due performance of the rite. Next, water was poured into the palms, part of which they sprinkled on the ground, and part on the Pindas. One or two of the men then took threads off their clothes and laid them on the Pindas. This act is alleged to be emblematical of presenting the bodies of their departed ancestors with garments. Meanwhile texts and prayers were repeated, under the direction of the Gayāwāl, and the hands were sometimes extended over the Pindas as if to invoke blessings. The whole rite was concluded by the men putting their heads to the ground before the officiating Brāhman and touching his feet.

The ceremonies.

"The number of Pindas varies with the number of ancestors for whom the Srāddhas are celebrated, and the size of the balls and the materials of which they are composed differ according to the caste and the country of those who performed the rite. I saw one party in the act of forming fourteen or fifteen Pindas with meal, which were of a much larger size than large marbles. This party was said to have come from the Dekhan. Sometimes the Pindas were placed on the betel-leaves with pieces of money, which were afterwards appropriated by the priests; and sometimes the water used was taken out of little pots by dipping

* Religious Life and Thought in India, pp. 310-311, by Monier Williams, M.A., C.L.E.

stalks of Kusa grass into the fluid and sprinkling it over the balls. At the end of all the ceremonies a prayer was said for pardon, less any minute part of the ceremonial had been unintentionally omitted. Then finally all the earthen platters employed were carried to a particular stone in the precincts of the temple and dashed to pieces there. No platter is allowed to be used a second time. The Pindas are left to be eaten by birds and other animals, or reverently deposited in the river."

The pilgrims.

In the *Gayā Mahātmya* it is laid down that the *Gayā arādhā* is equally efficacious at all times of the year, but there are three seasons when pilgrims flock to the sacred city, viz., (1) the month of Asin (September-October), (2) of Pus (December-January), and (3) of Chait (March-April); these three seasons are significantly styled *fanis* or harvests. Pilgrims from Bengal and the East come chiefly in Chait, and pilgrims from the north-west and west of India in the month of Asin. According to the sacred books, Asin is the most auspicious month, and this is the great time of pilgrimage, when men of the Punjab and Bombay, Gwalior and the South come to the pilgrim city: in fact, it is estimated that at this time no less than 100,000 pilgrims visit *Gayā*. But considerations of convenience probably regulate the seasons more than anything else. The importance of getting in the rich rice harvest, for instance, probably deters the Bengal pilgrims from coming in the Asin season; and the pilgrims from Northern and North-Western India do not like being away from home while the *rabi* is being harvested. The pilgrims are also influenced by the occurrence of a *kāla suddha* (auspicious time) or *kāla asuddha* (inauspicious time), and the occurrence of an eclipse is the occasion for a great influx of devotees.

The pilgrims are of three classes,—those who come voluntarily, those who are brought by paid agents of the *Gayāwāls*, and those brought by professional pilgrim hunters acting independently of the *Gayāwāls*. Voluntary pilgrims come all the year round, and the principal *Gayāwāls* depute servants to the railway station to meet the trains and fetch those pilgrims who should come to the n. By tacit consent, or as the result of immemorial custom, the whole of India has been parcelled out among the several families of *Gayāwāls*; and as a rule the

pilgrims start from their home knowing the names of their respective Gayāwāls, or the names of their ancestors. Sometimes, however, the pilgrim does not know in the jurisdiction of which Gayāwāl he falls, and in such cases it not unfrequently happens that the servants of the Gayāwāls quarrel as to who should have the pilgrim; in previous years fights over the pilgrims occasionally took place at the railway station. In many cases the question can be settled at once by reference to the Gayāwāls' *kāātās*, or books in which the names of their chief pilgrims and of the villages to which they belong are carefully recorded. When, however, a family of Gayāwāls has become extinct, as is sometimes the case, no such solution of the difficulty is possible; the pilgrim is, so to speak, intestate property, and opposing claims are put forward and hotly contested for the right of guiding him through the ceremonies and receiving his fees.

Many pilgrims are brought by professional pilgrim hunters who collect a number of persons wishing to perform obsequies at Gayā, and conduct them there. Disputes frequently occur in respect to these pilgrims, and the pilgrim hunters, taking advantage of these, manage to drive a bargain with a Gayāwāl, and generally receive, it is said, one-third to as much as one-half of the *suphal* gifts. The largest number of pilgrims, however, are brought by servants of the Gayāwāls sent out into the country expressly for the purpose. These servants are paid from 5 to 7 rupees a month, but in the case of Rājās and other important personages more highly-paid emissaries are sent. They start in the month of Srāban or Phāgun, taking *pedas* (sweet-meats) and other sacrificial offerings with them, realize arrears of remuneration due to their masters, collect pilgrims, and then return to Gayā, perhaps after several months. When they come to Gayā, the pilgrims lodge in licensed lodging-houses, which are generally owned by Gayāwāls. In this case the pilgrims are lodged free and are carefully tended by the Gayāwāls' servants, but if the houses are owned by others, they have to pay rent. Occasionally also the pilgrims put up outside the town.

There is no record of the number of pilgrims who visit Gayā every year. One hundred years ago it was estimated that they were not less than 100,000 annually, but when some of the great

Marāthās, who were attended by armies rather than guards, came to the place, the number was doubled. At the present day, the number of pilgrims must be much greater owing to the ease with which Gayā can be visited, and it is said that their number is not less than 300,000 a year.

The
pilgrim
priests.

When the pilgrim has presented himself before the Gayāwāh, Brāhman *āchārjyas* are deputed to conduct him personally round the different *vedis*, and perform the necessary ceremonies. Some of these are the paid servants of the Gayāwāls and others are remunerated by a share of the gifts made by the pilgrims. Except in the case of important personages, the Gayāwāls themselves perform no ceremonies beyond those at the Akshayaat, and their function is merely to have their feet worshipped, to receive the pilgrims' gifts, and to certify that the offerings made have been effectual. It is this right to have their feet worshipped and to pronounce the pilgrims, "Vale in pacem" which marks the Gayāwāls' unique position, as without them the Gayā *srāddha* would be impossible. There is however another class of priests, known as the *Dhāmins*, who share the peculiar position of the Gayāwāl as priests presiding over these ceremonies. The *Dhāmins* alone have the right to officiate at the ceremonies performed at five *vedis*, Pretsilā, Rāmsilā, Rāmakund, Brahmakund and Kāgbali, the Gayāwāls having a monopoly of the remainder. These five *vedis*, the *pāñchvedi* which comprises the second day of the pilgrims' tour, are all situated on or about the two hills, Rāmsilā and Pretsilā, which are peculiarly devoted to Yama and evil spirits. The general practice is for the pilgrim merely to promise gifts to the *Dhāmins* at these two hills, and, when he finally pays his dues and makes over his offerings to the Gayāwāl under the Akshayaat tree, the amount thus promised is deducted from them and made over to the *Dhāmins*, the Gayāwāl himself keeping one quarter of the amount. If the pilgrim wishes to make his offerings on the hill itself, the Gayāwāl's agent advances it and pays the *Dhāmin* three quarters of the amount on the spot.

Expenses
of pil-
grimage.

What a grievous tax these offerings formerly were may be realized from the following account given by Buchanan Hamilton. Writing in 1811 he says*—"Although the number of pilgrims

* Eastern India, by Montgomery Martin, vol. I, pp. 53-55.

has been gradually increasing for these five or six centuries, there continued great checks on it until Mr. Law* introduced many new regulations to give them protection. At many different places on approaching Gayā the pilgrims found custom-houses, erected by every land-holder or petty officer of Government who had power enough to compel them to pay contributions, for which there was no rule but the means of payment and the power of exaction. Mr. Law therefore abolished the whole of these custom-houses, and having ascertained that four sorts of pilgrimage were usually performed, he fixed a certain sum to be paid for a license for each. One class of pilgrims visits only one place, and, on receiving a license to visit this, the votary pays 2 rs. 1½ annas; another class visits two places, and pays 3 rs. 5½ annas; a third class visits 38 places, and pays 6 rs. 4¾ annas; the fourth class visits 45 places, and pays 14 rs. 2½ annas. Deductions are, however, made on all the licenses to Nepalese, who are not numerous, and on the highest licenses to persons who bring water from the Ganges to pour on the sacred places, who are considered as holy, and who are generally poor. These four classes of licenses are marked by seals of different colours, by which alone the persons generally employed as a check on imposition know the one from the other; and there is strong reason to suspect that many frauds are still committed, although there has been of late a considerable improvement of revenue. But the duty† to Government is a small part of the pilgrim's expense. The chief expense consists of the presents (*dakshina*), which must be made to the priests. The Bengalese, in fact, give chiefly grain, brass vessels, silver coin, and cloth; but sometimes they present cows. The presents nominally are in general quite different, but are trifles held in brass vessels covered with cloth, which in reality compose the most usual value of the present, and are sold to the next votary that comes. The Mahrattas give money, jewels, plate, fine cloth, elephants and horses. The very lowest person, performing his devotions at one place, cannot spend less, including duties, than 3½ rs.; those who worship at two places

* Mr. Law was Collector of Gayā at the close of the 18th century.

† This duty was a considerable source of revenue to Government. In 1812-13 the gross receipts were Rs. 2,76,890, and deducting the expenses the net revenue amounted to Rs. 2,33,440.

cannot spend less than 5 rs., but many spend 100 rs. The lowest rate of expense at the 38 places is 30 rs., and few there exceed 40 rs. The Bengalese, who worship at 45 places, usually expend from 40 to 200 rs. ; some, however, spend as much as 500 rs., and some few great men have gone so far as 5,000 rs. Almost all the Mahrattas worship at the 45 places, and several every year give 5,000 rs., while great chiefs expend 40 or even 50,000 rs. These expenses are exclusive of the charges of travelling, and of what is exacted by numberless solicitations to which the pilgrims are exposed. Every one, so far as he is able, feeds the Brahmans who attend.

“ No person can possibly go through the 45 places in less than 15 days, and persons of rank take from one to three months, during which, from morning till night, they are not a moment free from the most clamorous solicitations of religious mendicants, from 200 to 300 of whom, besides the priests, hover round the place with incredible diligence and importunity. When the votary has made his offerings and performed all his ceremonies the priest that attends him binds his thumbs together with a garland, and says that he will fine him on account of his ancestors. When the fine is paid, the Brahman unties the garland, and declares that the ceremonies have been duly performed ; nor are the ceremonies considered as of any effect until this declaration has been made. Formerly it was the custom of the priest to keep the votaries' thumbs tied until he consented to give a sum that was considered adequate to his circumstances ; but Government has declared that all contributions must be voluntary, and the collector of the duty or magistrate will, on complaint, compel the priest to perform his duty, and to accept of whatever the votary pleases. People, however, from distant countries, who do not know our customs, are still often much abused, of which while on Pretasila, I saw no less than two instances, two decent Brahmans from Malwa applying to me for assistance : one was stript even to the skin, and had his thumbs tied ; the other was sitting in despair at the foot of the hill, the sum demanded being so exorbitant that he would not venture to ascend. The checks, however, on this violence have rendered it much less frequent, and have given great satisfaction, not only to the votaries, but to many of the more moderate

priests who perceive that the security given to the votaries has greatly increased * their number. ”

Whatever modes of extortion or pressure may have been used in former times, the Gayāwāls now confine themselves to the more specious methods of flattery, solicitude about personal comfort, and appeals to worldly and religious benefit. Other influences are seldom or never used, and the pilgrims generally pay their fees voluntarily, according to their position and means, and in accordance with what has grown to be as much a custom as any other part of their ceremonial observances. A poor pilgrim can, it is said, complete the orthodox round of the 45 *vedīs* or sacred spots, and satisfy all authorized demands at a total cost of Rs. 15 to Rs. 20. The amount increases with the wealth or social rank of the pilgrim ; and very large sums are occasionally paid by the wealthy, and quite voluntarily. One of the Peshwās of Poona is said to have paid a lakh of rupees in fees alone, and Randhair Singh of Kashmir is said to have given presents in cash, ornaments, and other movable property to the value of 3 or 4 lakhs. The fees and gifts do not always consist of cash, as landed property, elephants, jewels, and movable property of many kinds are also given. More than two-thirds of whatever is expended by the pilgrim in the performance of his ancestor's obsequies is said to go into the pocket of the Gayāwāl, and his position is therefore one of affluence.

It has already been mentioned that the Gayā legend possibly embodies an allegory of the triumph of Brahmanism over Buddhism, and it is noticeable that the Gayā ritual contains two features, of which one is possibly and the other is certainly of Buddhist origin, viz., foot-worship and the adoration of the Bodhi tree. One of the most important of the ceremonies observed at Gayā is the worship of the footprints of various gods, and especially of those of Vishnu. The latter is absolutely essential, but, besides this, the pilgrim is bound on the 6th day of his pilgrimage to offer up worship at no less than 18 other *padās* or sacred footprints in the precincts of the Vishnupad temple. Dr. Rājendralāla Mitra † has no doubt that the marks

ORIGIN
OF THE
GAYA
Śrāddha.

Foot-
worship.

* In the seven years 1798—1805 the number of pilgrims who received licenses increased from 17,679 to 31,114.

† *Buddha Gayā*, pp. 124-125.

of Vishnu's feet enshrined in this temple were originally a Buddhist emblem. "In all Buddhist countries," he says, "carvings of Buddha's feet are held in great veneration. In many temples they occupy the most prominent place; and when the Hindus got hold of Gayā, the popular feeling in favour of the most sacred footprint there was so high that, unable to set it aside, the Brāhmins recognized it, under the name of Vishnu's feet, as the most sacred object of worship at that place; and thousands of Hindu pilgrims from the most distant parts of India to this day visit and worship it every year for the salvation of their ancestors." The same belief that the Brāhmins adopted the worship of Buddha's feet has been expressed, though tentatively, by General Cunningham * with reference to the large circular stone with two human feet carved upon it which lies in a small open temple of 4 pillars, in front of the Bodh Gayā temple. This temple is now called Buddha-pad, and General Cunningham was of opinion that "the feet may have been those of Buddha, which, on the decline of Buddhism, were quietly appropriated to Vishnu by the accommodating Brāhmins."

The Bodhi tree.

With regard to the Bodhī tree we are on more certain ground. It is one of the *vedis* which the Gayā pilgrim visits on the 4th day of his rounds; and though the *pīpal*-tree to the north is now used more largely for the offering of *pindas*, there is no doubt that the Buddhist tree was appropriated as an object of adoration by the Hindus many centuries ago. When it was so appropriated, we have no means of knowing; but it seems certain that it was an object of attestation to the Hindus as late as the 7th century, for about 600 A.D. Sasānka, a devoted adherent of Brahmanism, dug it up and burnt it with fire, "desiring," Hiuen Tsiang says, "to destroy it utterly and not leave a trace of it behind." It appears probable that, following their usual policy, the Brāhmins adopted the tree as a suitable object for veneration on the decline of Buddhism, and in this way made a profitable use of the worship it received from the Buddhists. However that may be, the sacred book of the Gayāwāls, the Gayā Mahātmya, which forms part of the Vāyu Purāna, though it is most probably an addition of comparatively late date, contains a special invocation to the *pīpal*-tree at

* Report Arch. Surv. India, vol. I, pp. 9-10, 1871.

Dharmāranya (Bodh Gayā), which is described as the king of trees, planted by Dharmarāj (Buddha) himself. In the 16th century a pandit employed by the Chauhān zamindār of Patna records the curious custom of Hindus embracing the Bodhi tree; and, as we have already seen, Buchanan Hamilton mentions worship being offered to it by Hindus in 1811, though he goes on to say that some zealous person had lately built a stair on the outside of the terrace from which the tree grew, "so that the orthodox may pass up without entering the porch, and thus seeing the hateful image of Buddha." The Sāstric authority for offering *pindas* under it is contained in the Tristhalisetu—a work written about 400 years ago by Narāyan Bhatta, who migrated from the Marāthā country to Benares during the tyrannical rule of the Nizām Shāhi princes of Ahmednagar. The pilgrims from places in which the Tristhalisetu is held in esteem still offer *pindas* under the Bodhi tree and have done so for more than three centuries, but, on the other hand, such offerings are not made by the Bengalis, Criyās and Maithilis, who do not know of the work.

Though these two portions of the Gayā *śrāddha* appear to be Buddhistic in origin, it is impossible not to perceive how much more marked are the elements of this worship which appear to have been taken from a more primitive form of religion. Examination of the Gayā Mahātmya, the sacred book containing the legends of the origin of this cult and prescribing its ritual, leaves one impressed with the prominent place assigned to the powers of hell. The most striking feature of the Gayā Mahātmya, though in many respects Vaishnava in tone and in its invocation of Vishnu, is the emphasis laid on the necessity of propitiating Yama and of delivering the ghosts of ancestors from the lives of fiends and evil spirits. A long invocation, called the Finda Kharasi, which is prescribed at the time of offering *pindas*, clearly embodies a belief in the necessity of propitiating the disembodied souls of those who have died violent and unnatural deaths. This *mantra* specifies those to whom offering should be made, viz., among others, those whose funeral rites have not been performed, those who have died through abortion, been burnt, been devoured by dogs, been poisoned or hanged: those who have committed suicide or been shot by

Animistic features.

arrows, died by drowning, of starvation or thirst; ancestors who have been lame or maimed, or who are roaming about as evil ghosts, or who "by the snare of their deeds" have made it difficult ever again to live human lives.

In the same spirit, offering at Pretsilā, *i.e.*, the Hill of Ghosts, is enjoined that Yama may not beat or bruise the ghosts of the dead, and his two hell-hounds must be worshipped at Rāmsilā that they may not bark and bay at the unhappy spirits. At Pretsilā again the pilgrim, sitting with his face to the south—the point of the horizon representing the realm of the God of Hell—is to throw *sattu* and *tīl* in the air and offer the following prayer: "May those of my ancestors who live the lives of evil spirits be pleased to take this *pinda* and be satisfied. May they accept the water given by my hands and go to heaven." Many of the other *tedis* or holy spots, which the pilgrim must visit, are similarly sacred to the God of Hell. On Dharmasilā Yama is said to be immovably settled; at Gayā there is a tank, named Baitarani, the Hindu Styx, by bathing in which salvation is obtained; and at other holy spots offerings are ordered to be made to the hounds of Hell, to the four crows of Hell, and to the God of Hell himself with the prayer: "I offer this to thee, O Yama, for the deliverance of my ancestors."

It is noticeable moreover that the greatest rush of pilgrims occurs in the month of Asin, when the powers of the malevolent dead are most feared, and that the propitiation of evil spirits is practised particularly on the hill of Pretsilā. The guardians of this hill shrine, the Dhāmins are an order of priests entirely distinct from the Gayāwāls, and the peculiar arrangement by which the Dhāmin gets three-quarters of the offerings made on the hill and the Gayāwāl the rest, possibly represents an old compromise between the more orthodox Bālmans and the priests who officiated at the rites of aboriginal demonolatry practised on the jungle-clad hills: the existence of some rude stone circles near the foot of the hill, which are traditionally ascribed to the Kols, at least lends colour to the belief that it was once a centre of their worship. However this may be, the description of spirits invoked in the Pinda Kharasi and their invocation show that it is those spirits in particular who have met with a violent or unnatural end who are to be saved from the state of evil spirits; and indeed it is expressly stated that offerings are to be made to them whether

roaming as evil spirits or suffering in the obscurest hell. Such a conception closely resembles the more vulgar demonolatri which consists in offerings to, and worship of the malignant spirits of the dead. This demonolatri is the prevalent form of religion throughout the district, and there appears to be much of the same belief, under the cloak of orthodoxy, in the Gayā *srāddha*. The conception of the state of evil roaming spirits, who are to be propitiated by offerings and worship is not distinctively Brahmanical, and it plays so prominent a part in the sacred book of Gayā that it appears a plausible hypothesis that at least in some respects the Gayā *srāddha* represents the adoption by Brahmanism of the popular demonolatri which preceded it and has existed side by side with it to the present day.

CHAPTER V.

POPULAR RELIGION.

THE district of Gayā occupies an interesting position in the religious life of India. On the one hand, it is well known as having been the birthplace of Buddhism and the scene of some of the earliest preaching of Buddha; and though Buddhism as an active form of faith has passed away from the hearts of the people, the sacred tree under which Śākya Muni attained Buddhahood still attracts devout pilgrims from distant countries. In striking contrast to the purity of the early Buddhist faith is a primitive form of religion, now prevalent in the district, which embraces aboriginal rites and beliefs roughly grafted on to a loose and elastic Hinduism. In the town of Gayā, again, there is a special form of orthodox Hinduism, which finds its manifestation in the Gayā *Srāddha*; but the really popular religion consists of the propitiation of evil spirits by offerings before stocks and stones.

TRACES OF
BUDDHISM.

Buddhism appears to have never had any real hold in the southern part of the district, but was confined to the northern portion of the district, which is rich in Buddhist remains. The southern part of the district was probably jungle, hill and forest in the Buddhistic times, and was untouched by Buddhist civilization. In the north Buddhism remained in a more or less flourishing condition until its final extinction by the Muhammadans, and the vast number of images dating back to the Pāla kings (800—1200 A.D.) still bear witness to its popularity; while the very name Bihār (*vihārā* or monastery), formerly applied to this part of the district in place of the old Magadha, shows what a firm hold Buddhism once had over it. But there is now no sign that the existing religion of the people is in any way affected by Buddha's teaching, by the subsequent Buddhist cult or by its later ritualistic developments.

In the preceding chapter it has been mentioned that a trace of the influence of Buddhism may perhaps be detected in the

sanctity ascribed to the Bodhi tree, and in the worship of the marks of Vishnu's feet. These however are concerned with the special form of worship observed in Gayā, and one looks vainly for traces of the Buddhist cult in other directions. Images of Buddha and other Buddhistic images and *chaityas* are found in temples of all kinds, under trees, and in the open air in all parts of the district, and are treated as different deities, lingas, etc. Such images have been enshrined in hundreds of temples, in temples of Siva, of Mahādeo, of Vishnu, of the Sun, of Sitalā, the goddess of disease, and others. Hundreds of *chaityas* have similarly been set up in *sivālās* filling the places of lingas. But this is simply because these images and *chaityas* have been found lying about and have been utilized by the Hindus as images of their own deities or as the linga of Mahādeo. They are worshipped by the ignorant Hindus, not as Buddha or as Buddhistic emblems, but as their own gods and symbols.

In the same way, stone images of Buddha dug up in the fields are not unfrequently set up to represent the various evil spirits propitiated by the lower castes, but the worshippers do not know that they are Buddhistic images. There must be something tangible to represent a godling or even a malignant spirit, and the image is something tangible that will serve their purpose, as they can rub vermilion on it or pour a libation over it or sacrifice a fowl, goat or pig before it. In all cases, the rites are Hindu and not Buddhistic, and no traces of Buddhism * are visible. At Bodh Gayā, it is true, the large stone image of Buddha on the ground-floor of the temple is worshipped by some low-caste Hindus in the neighbourhood, but this is a recent innovation, and no orthodox Hindu thinks of doing so or regards the worship as anything but incongruous and spurious. In Gayā, as in other parts of Bengal, Buddhism is dead as a separate and current religion. It was a branch that sprouted from the tree of Hinduism, grew vigorously for a considerable period, and then withered off.

* In Dr. Grierson's Notes on the district of Gayā (p. 3) it is said that the inhabitants of the northern portion of the district "still worship a so-called incarnation of Vishnu whom they call *Baudh Deo*." Special enquiries were made during the census operations of 1901 as to the existence of this worship, but no traces of it could be found.

POPULAR
HINDU
RELIGION.

The religion which is now prevalent among the mass of the people throughout the district consists of the propitiation of evil spirits, the genesis of which appears to be due to the belief of the peasant in malignant powers of evil. "The rude mind," it has been said, "with difficulty associates the idea of power and benignity. A shadowy conception of power that by much persuasion can be induced to refrain from inflicting harm is the shape most easily taken by the Invisible in the minds of men, who have always been pressed close by primitive wants and to whom a life of hard toil has never been illuminated by any enthusiastic religious faith." The religion of the uneducated majority of the population is of this type. It is a curious mixture of Hinduism and Animism, in which the belief in evil spirits and godlings is the main ingredient. The common people have their shapeless stone or block to represent a spirit or godling to which they make simple offerings in the open air, while side by side with it is a temple to one of the regular gods of the Hindu pantheon with its carved image and elaborate rites. The latter, however, is not the real every-day working religion of the people, and the orthodox Hindu creed appeals but little to the peasants.

Worship of
evil spirits.

The current belief is that there are a number of malevolent spirits who exercise their influence on the bodies and minds of men by means of demoniacal possession. Worship, therefore, consists of periodical propitiation of them in order to escape their attacks, or to induce them to relinquish the unhappy victims on whom they have descended. Man lives surrounded by powers of evil, inimical to his health and well-being, and success in life can only be obtained by propitiating the malignant spirits which beset his path at every turn. The personification of the evil spirit carries out this idea, as it is described as being fearful of shape and black of hue, tall as a palm-tree, with long projecting teeth and streaming dishevelled hair. In fact, the whole appearance of these fiends resembles very much that of the *genii* in the Arabian Nights. They live in desolate places and especially favour the jungle and wild hill country. They generally drop down on the unwary traveller from trees, and one, *Panduba* by name, comes out of rivers and tanks, and drags in and drowns the belated wayfarer.

Though they are said to have an incorporeal essence, they must have something to represent them and to receive the offerings of their votaries. Sometimes a little heap of earth, called a *pīndi*, is formed; sometimes a brick is placed on a raised mound, sometimes a log of wood; sometimes a rough stone, and sometimes a hewn stone or even an old image. These are daubed with vermilion; libations and offerings are made to the spirits they represent; and occasionally a pair of clogs and a small wooden seat are placed before them. The lower castes attribute evil of all kinds to these spirits; illness is almost invariably ascribed to possession, and the remedy lies not in medicine, but in exorcism. The proceedings in case of possession are of a well-observed type. An *ojhā* or wizard, who is believed to command a spirit of greater power, is sent for, incantations follow, and offerings of sweet-meats or a goat are made. If the *bhūt* is obstinate and will not leave his victim, physical compulsion is resorted to; the man is soundly beaten, and red pepper and turmeric smoke are put to his nose. The idea running throughout the ceremony seems to be partly that the *ojhā's* familiar spirit will drive the other away, and partly that the spirit which causes the trouble may be cajoled into leaving his victim by means of offerings. It is noticeable that in the wilder tracts to the south of Gayā men of aboriginal descent are recognized as being peculiarly the intermediaries between these spirits and the human race, and often officiate when offerings are made.

Witches are regarded as occupying quite a different position to the *ojhā* or exorcist. The *ojhā* is a man of low caste with a recognized position and profession; he has not the power of the evil eye; and he is not feared therefore like the *dāin* or witch. He practises openly and his services can be hired, but witches work secretly and cannot be bribed. They are charged with cutting open children and taking out their liver, and also with the practice, commonly imputed to witches in the Middle Ages, of making images of flour to represent their enemies and piercing them with knives and needles. It is generally believed that at the time of the Dasaharā the witches assemble in some waste place, where they chant unholy incantations and dance naked. Here they meet with the spirits of the children whom they have

decoyed and slain, and hold with them a witches' dance. The criminal records of the district contain numbers of cases of the murder of old women credited with the power of the evil eye.

A peculiar feature of the power of *ojhās* over *bhūts* is found in the actual purchase and sale of them, which is said to be practised by some low castes in the jungle-covered tracts to the south of the district. The *bhūt*, when under proper control, is a valuable possession and becomes a marketable commodity. When the sale has been arranged, the *ojhā* hands over a corked bamboo cylinder which is supposed to contain the *bhūt*; this is then taken to the place, usually a tree, at which it is intended that the *bhūt* should in future reside; a small ceremony accompanies the installation, liquor is poured on the ground or on the *pindis* erected there, the cork is taken out, and the spirit is supposed to take up his residence at the spot. The function of the spirit thus purchased is to act as the guardian of the village fields and crops. Should any person be hardy enough to steal from a field under his guardianship, he is certain to be stricken by the *bhūt*, and in a few days he sickens and dies. Usually, however, the knowledge that a field is under the protection of a *bhūt* is sufficient to keep off all marauders. Thieves have also been known to restore stolen property under the threat that otherwise a *bhūt* would be called down on them.

Though *bhūt* and *dānk* are the generic designations of all kinds of malignant spirits, their name is legion. In general, they are the spirits of those who have died a violent or unnatural death, e.g., by suicide, drowning, murder, lightning, sunstroke, snake-bite, a fall from a tree, etc. A particularly malevolent fiend is *Kichin* or *Churail*, the spirit of a woman who dies in child-birth, who may be known by the fact that her feet are turned backwards and that she has no mouth. She is specially feared by women, but sometimes she seduces young men and kills them by a slow process of emaciation. *Baimat* is the spirit of a child who dies soon after birth. When a *Bhuiyā* comes to an untimely end, he becomes a *gauhail* or village *bhūt*; a *pindi* is set up smeared with vermilion, and he is deified as *Cheri*. To the west of the district, where man-eaters have caused great loss of life, low-caste men killed by tigers are apotheosized under the name of *Baglāut*. The disembodied spirits of men of low caste who die unnatural deaths

become *Dāno*, and similarly *Brahm Pichās* (*i.e.*, *Brahm Pisāch*, *Pisāch* being equivalent to spirit) is the ghost of *Brāhmans* who meet a violent end. The most famous however of all *dānks* or evil spirits in this district is one known as the *Raghuni Dānk*, which is located at the village of *Tungi* in the *Nawāda* subdivision. Legend relates that a *Bābhan* named *Raghuni* was working in his fields at *Tungi* one day with his *kamiyā* or hereditary serf. He sent the latter to his house, where he had left his sister, to fetch a basket of seed. The sister gave him the seed, and when she was lifting it on to his head, some of the red powder (*sindūr*) on her forehead was rubbed on to him. When he returned, *Raghuni*, seeing the marks of *sindūr*, suspected the two of an intrigue, and, after killing them both, committed suicide. All three became the *Raghuni Dānk*, a spirit which is represented by some *pindis* in a small hut at *Tungi*. It is by far the most potent spirit in the district and is worshipped in all parts of it; and, as an instance of its power, it is said that a European who outraged the spirit by having some shoes put on the *pindis* was at once punished by an illness which came on the same day.

Allied to the worship of such spirits is the worship of godlings unknown to orthodox Hinduism. In some cases the god is a deified hero, such as *Goraiya* and *Salais* or *Salesh*, two bandit chiefs deified by the *Dosādhs*, and *Lorik*, the hero of the *Goalās*; in others extraordinary or gifted individuals, such as *Kamalo Bibi* mentioned below; and even *satīs* are commemorated with *pindis* and offerings of images of horses, moulded from clay. At the village of *Nabinagar* in the *Aurangābād* subdivision there is a shrine sacred to a godling, called *Sokhā Bābā*, who is possibly a deified physician, as persons bitten by snakes are brought there in the hope that a cure will be effected. In other cases the godling appears to represent a tribal ancestor, such as *Bān Singh* among the *Bhogtās*, a caste of aboriginal descent, in the south of *Gayā*; this god is regarded as the ancestor of the race; he has no idol or image, but only *pindis* put up in small huts, and is propitiated with sacrifices of goats in order that he may ward off wild beasts. *Dharbā*, a godling worshipped by low castes in the jungles, though said by many to be merely the spirit of a *Dhāngar* who has met with a violent or sudden death, is claimed by others as the ancestor of their tribe. They maintain that though a man who

Worship
of
godlings.

has died an unnatural death may become some other *bhūt*, he cannot become Dharhā, as the latter is a tribal god and distinct from other *bhūt*. The different accounts given serve to show how narrow a line divides the godling and the evil spirit, and the same spirit runs through the offerings made to Sitalā, the goddess of disease.

POPULAR
MUHAM-
MADAN
RELIGION.

The religion of a large number of the Muhammadans closely approximates to that of the Hindus. They freely indulge in superstitious observances and copy Hindu rites; some even join in the worship of the Sun and offer libations like Hindus; and one curious feature of the Shab-i-Barāt is the offering to deceased ancestors of puddings made of flour. The more ignorant have a pantheon of village gods; like Hindus, they resort to exorcism in case of sickness; and it is perhaps not too much to say that with them Islām is not so much a question of religion as of caste.

There are certain forms of worship common among Muhammadans which are neither based on the Korān, nor, apparently adopted from the Hindus. The most common of these is the adoration of departed Pirs. When a holy Pir leaves this life, he is supposed to be still present in spirit, and his tomb becomes a place of pilgrimage to which persons resort for the cure of disease or the exorcism of evil spirits, or to obtain the fulfilment of some cherished wish, such as the birth of a child or success in pending litigation. The educated deny that Pirs are worshipped, and say that they are merely asked to intercede with God, but it is very doubtful if this distinction is recognized by the lower classes. Here, as elsewhere, the adoration of the Pānch Pir is common, a worship which is not confined to Musalmāns, but is also practised by Hindus; but there are also certain local Pirs, such as Mansur Pir, whose tomb in the compound of the Judge's Court at Gaya is visited by numbers who desire to be cured of diseases, and is specially frequented by litigants. At Miranpur Nadera is another *dargāh* erected over the remains of a saintly Pir, where women who desire offspring come by night and tie shreds of cloth to a neighbouring tree. At Sihuli near Rafiganj the tomb of Saiyid Sialkoti is reputed to be particularly efficacious for casting out evil spirits; it is visited by Hindus as well as by Muhammadans, and his votaries seek to obtain the favours of the Pir by offer in

of cocks. Similarly at Bithu followers of both religions offer cocks and set up *pindis* before the tomb of Makhdum Shāh.

Closely allied to the adorations of Pirs is the homage paid to certain mythical persons, of whom the principal are Sheikh Saddu and Kamālo Bibi. According to the legend current in this district, the former was a student at Morādābād, who found a lamp with four wicks and lit it. Four genii, thereupon, appeared and informed him that they were slaves of the lamp and were at his service: he used them for purposes of debauchery, but eventually he was caught in the embraces of a princess and killed by her father, who had been informed of the intrigue by his own familiar spirit. The spirit of Sheikh Saddu is worshiped all over the district. He takes possession both of men and women, who, when attacked, recite and sing; when this happens, Sheikh Saddu is propitiated with sacrifices of goats and cocks. Such persons are supposed to have supernatural powers, and in cases of sickness or trouble are often called in to find out the cure. Kamālo Bibi is the subject of many extraordinary legends. According to one account, she lived at Kāko in the time of a Buddhist Rājā Kanaka, who sent her a dish made of rats; when the dish was brought before her, the rats came to life, and she cursed the Rājā. At once Kāko fell in ruins, in which the Rājā was buried. Another legend relates that her husband tried to leave her and walked till nightfall when he stopped and slept. He woke up to find himself again at Kāko, and two other attempts at desertion also failed, owing to his wife's magical charms. Her tomb is resorted to by both Hindus and Musalmāns, and is regarded as a great place for exorcism or for the cure of any illness. Women constantly go there with small offerings in order to obtain offspring and tie up strips from their dress at the door of the tomb. A stone engraved with an inscription is smeared with oil by the pilgrims, who afterwards anoint themselves with it: this ointment is said to confer the gift of tongues, as they at once speak ecstasically. Another mythical personage whose celebrity appears to be due to his tragical end is Ghāzi Miā, for according to the legend current in Gayā, he perished in a fire on the eve of his wedding. His death is still commemorated by a fair held in May at Kenduā, 4 miles south of Gayā, which is attended by large numbers of Musalmāns. The worship of Sultān Shahid, which

is observed by low-caste Hindus as well as by low Musalmāns, appears to be prompted by no such conception, and to be more distinctively Hindu. A *pindi* is erected to him near Devī's temple, and cocks are offered in his honour before the worship of Devī begins. It is explained that this worship is given to him because he is the body-guard, or, according to another account, the paramour of Devī.

All these cults seem to be of the same character as the popular religion which is common among the Hindus of this district. Sultān Shahid appears to be the male counterpart of Devī or to be some godling who has obtained his first step in the popular pantheon by being made the warder of the temple of the great goddess; the worship of Sheikh Saddu is apparently due to the common belief that those who die violent deaths become evil spirits; and the reverence for Kamalo and Ghāzi Miā is akin to the deification of persons who have been approved miracle workers, or who have died in some extraordinary or tragical way. They show clearly the extent to which the religion of the illiterate Musalmān has been permeated by the superstitious beliefs of his Hindu neighbours.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PEOPLE.

THE first census of the district was taken in 1872, when the area included within its boundaries was the same as at present, except for 6 square miles which were transferred three years afterwards to the adjoining district of Hazāribāgh. This enumeration disclosed a total population of 1,949,750, the average density being 413 persons to the square mile. The number of inhabitants recorded at the census of 1881 showed an increase of 9·1 per cent. on these figures, the population being returned at 2,124,682; but a large part of the increase is believed to be due to the greater accuracy of the enumeration, and this figure is therefore somewhat misleading. During the next ten years the population was practically stationary, and in 1891 it had risen only to 2,138,331, or 0·6 per cent. more than in 1881. The reason for this slow growth appears to be that the district suffered severely from the ravages of persistent fever throughout the decade, and that emigration increased greatly while immigration fell off. The result of the census was to show that Gayā lost nearly 150,000 by emigration; Calcutta, which in 1881 had among its residents only 15,767 persons born in Gayā, having in 1891 altogether 32,412 natives of that district—a number double that contributed by any other district in Bihār. If the number of emigrants and immigrants is excluded, the net population shows a real increase of 2·8 per cent. for men and 3·0 per cent. for women.

GROWTH
OF POPU-
LATION.

This growth was not sustained, and the census of 1901 showed a marked decline, the number of inhabitants recorded being 2,059,933, or nearly 78,400 less than in 1891. This decrease was due to two causes—the outbreak of plague at the time of the census and the general unhealthiness which prevailed

Census of
1901.

in the preceding ten years. In this decade conditions were on the whole unfavourable, and the state of the poorer classes was unsatisfactory. During the earlier years fever was very prevalent; and though its ravages were not so great in subsequent years, the death-rate was swelled by epidemics of cholera. In 1891-92 there was scarcity owing to the failure of the winter rice and spring crops, and again in 1896-97 some distress was caused by the short outturn, which was aggravated by the high prices of food-grains consequent on famine elsewhere. Besides this, the river Sakri overflowed its banks in 1896 carrying away several villages in the Nawāda subdivision and covering the land with a deposit of silt. Thrice during the decade the number of deaths exceeded that of births reported, and the whole period was decidedly unhealthy.

At the same time, but for the appearance of the plague in the latter part of 1900, there seems no reason why the population should have decreased, as it did, by 3·7 per cent. The disease broke out in Gayā town in October, and by the time the final enumeration took place, it had spread with much virulence over the greater part of the district. The people of villages where plague appeared left their homes, taking refuge in temporary sheds constructed sometimes near and sometimes far away from the village sites; and large numbers moved away into other districts. The census results were consequently affected in three ways: firstly, by a mortality far in excess of that indicated in the death returns, secondly, by the departure to their own homes of temporary settlers from other districts, and, thirdly, by deaths and desertions among the census staff, and partly also by the difficulty of enumerating panic-stricken villagers, who were daily and even hourly moving from the villages to escape the ravages of the disease. The loss due to the flight of natives of other districts may be taken as the difference between the immigrant population finally recorded and that recorded 10 years previously, or about 8,000 souls. The rest of the decrease must apparently be attributed almost entirely to plague mortality and the flight of the residents from the plague-stricken parts of the district. Enquiries made by the Magistrate showed that in the Tekari thāna alone more than 11,000 persons had left their homes since the preliminary record, but that, in spite of exceptional difficulties, the

work of enumeration had been carried out with great care and precision.

When we turn to the statistics for individual thānas, the responsibility of the plague for the loss of population which occurred becomes very apparent. Up to the date of the census, the epidemic had wrought most havoc in the Tekāri thāna, and this thāna sustained a loss of 19·8 per cent. ; then come Atri, Gayā town and Gayā thāna with decreases of 14·9, 11·3 and 6·5 per cent. respectively. On the other hand, the Nawāda sub-division, which was remarkably free from plague up to the date of the census, showed an increase in every thāna, and a small tract to the north-west, which benefits from canal irrigation and also escaped the ravages of the epidemic, added to its population. In the thānas to the south of the district there was also a decrease, for which however the plague was not to blame. In these parts the population is not progressive ; in Sherghāti and Barāchatti there has been a continuous decadence since 1881 ; and the falling off may be ascribed partly to long continued unhealthiness and partly to emigration to the adjoining districts of Hazāribāgh and Palāmau.

In the district as a whole there are 437 persons to the square mile, as compared with the average of 400 per square mile for the whole of Bengal, and of 653 for the Patna Division ; the pressure of the population on the soil is, in fact, less in Gaya than in any other district in the Division. Density of population is determined very largely by the physical characteristics of the two tracts into which the district is divided. It is least in the south, where the land is imperfectly irrigated and comparatively barren, and where a large area is still under jungle ; in these tracts the population is very sparse, not rising to more than 278 to the square mile. In the north, where the soil is more fertile and a considerable area is protected from drought by an extensive system of artificial irrigation, the population is fairly dense, and the number of persons to the square mile is more than double that in the less favoured tracts to the south. Statistics of the population appear in the Statistical Appendix, from which it will be seen that the pressure of the people on the land is greatest in the highly cultivated tract included in the Jahānābād thāna, where the large number of 666 persons to the square mile is found, and that the minimum (257

GENERAL
CHARAC-
TERISTICS.

Density of
popula-
tion.

persons to the square mile) is reached in the Bārāchatti thāna, in which there is a considerable area of hill and waste land.

Migration.

There is a large volume of emigration from Gayā, and the number of its emigrants far exceeds that of the immigrants. With the exception of emigrants who settle permanently in the adjoining districts of Palāmau and Hazāribāgh, this migration is generally of a temporary character. Every year large numbers leave the district in search of work on the roads, railways and fields, returning at the end of the hot weather to take part in the agricultural operations which commence with the bursting of the monsoon. Others find their way to Calcutta, Hooghly and elsewhere in Lower Bengal, where there is a demand for men to serve as *darwāns*, peons and the like, or as weavers in jute mills. An estimate derived from enquiries in typical villages made in the year 1888 shows that 0·7 per cent. of the rural population were thus absent from their homes ; but there is every reason to believe that, now that railways have pierced the district in all directions, this annual exodus is very much greater. How large it is and how much it exceeds the volume of immigration may be seen from the fact that in 1891 over 200,000 persons born in Gayā were found in other parts of Bengal, while it had recovered only 54,000 by immigration. In 1901 nearly 59,000, or 2·8 per cent. of the entire population, were residing in Bengal proper at the time of the census, the emigrants to Calcutta alone constituting nearly two-thirds of the total number, while over 17,000 were living in the adjoining metropolitan districts. The immigrants from adjoining districts were found to be only half as numerous as the emigrants, and those from distant villages were outnumbered in the ratio of 27 to 1 ; but these figures were affected by the prevalence of plague in Gayā. Emigration to the tea districts of Assam is not popular, and the average number of immigrants registered during the ten years ending in 1904 has been only 1,365. The number is insignificant, but in the Patna Division it is exceeded only in Shahābād. Migration to the colonies is equally unimportant, the total number of emigrants during the decade 1891—1901 being only 1,423.

Towns and villages.

Gayā is essentially a rural district. The great majority of the population are engaged in agriculture, and the people have hitherto developed no tendency to flock into the towns. The

tenant usually pays a part of his crops to the landlord in lieu of a money-rent, and village officials, such as the carpenter, blacksmith, barber, washerman and *patwāri*, are generally paid in kind at a fixed rate. Every householder has his grain store, by which he procures his luxuries in times of plenty, or averts famine after unfavourable seasons. There are no manufactures of importance; the old carpet, paper, and sugar industries have dwindled away; and agriculture is the one and prevailing occupation of all classes. No new centres of industry of any importance have sprung up; and the rapid development of commerce and manufactures which is so powerful a factor in the increase of an urban population is unknown. On the other hand, no less than three new lines of railway have been opened in the district within the last few years, and the trading classes have consequently set up business on the line of rail. The concentration of merchants in Gayā town has been marked, and some of the richer landholders, who formerly resided on their country estates, have taken up their residence in the town, and house-rent is consequently rising. In spite, however, of the improvement which has taken place in the means of communication, only 5 per. cent. of the population live in urban areas, viz., in the eight towns of Gayā, Dāūd-nagar, Tekāri, Aurangābād, Hasuā, Jahānābād, Nawāda and Sherghāti, the remainder of the population congregating in 7,871 villages. The three towns first named, which are municipalities, showed at the last census a decrease in the number of their inhabitants, which was very considerable in the case of Gayā and Tekāri, where plague was raging at the time. The aggregate urban population is 114,425, Gayā with 71,288 inhabitants accounting for nearly two-thirds of the whole number. None of the other towns have more than 10,000 inhabitants, and the population of Sherghāti is only 2,641.

In common with other Bihār districts, Gayā has a marked excess of females over males, there being 1,037 females to every thousand males. The proportion of unmarried persons is also high, viz., 394 out of 1,000 males and 285 out of every thousand females, and is greater than in any of the districts lying south of the Ganges, except Shāhābād. The census of 1901 shows an abnormal sex proportion in the cases of Kahārs (males 49,978 and females 60,121), Jolāhās (males 32,169 and females 42,083),

Sex and
age.

Kaīls (males 2,913 and females 4,199), and a few other castes. The reason for this is that the male members of these castes often remain absent from their homes in quasi-permanent employ elsewhere, leaving their female relatives behind. This explanation is supported by the statistics of persons born in Gayā but enumerated elsewhere, which also show a very striking disproportion of sex. In Calcutta out of 36,953 persons enumerated as born in Gayā, 27,981 were males and 8,972 females; in the 24-Parganas out of 6,037 persons, 4,146 were returned as males and 1,891 as females, and the same disproportion was found in other places in which emigrants from Gaya were residing at the time of the census. In spite of the large number of emigrants from the districts, the mean age of the population is comparatively high. This is only what is to be expected in a declining population where births are comparatively few in number, and having regard to the decrease in the population which has taken place, the wonder is that the average age has not risen to a higher figure.

Language.

The vernacular current over the whole district is the dialect of Bihāri Hindī known as Magahī or Māgadhī. Magahī is* properly speaking the language of the country of Magadha, which roughly corresponded to what is at the present day the district of Patna and the northern half of Gayā, but the language is not confined to this area. It is also spoken all over the rest of Gayā and over the district of Hazāribāgh; on the west it extends to a portion of Palāmanu, and on the east to portions of the districts of Monghyr and Bhāgalpur. Over the whole of this area it is practically one and the same dialect, with hardly any local variations, though it is acknowledged that the purest form of Magahī is spoken in Gayā, where it is the vernacular of 2,667,877 of the people. It is condemned by speakers of other Indian languages as being as rude and uncouth as the people who use it. Like Maithilī, it has a complex system of verbal conjugation, and the principal difference between the two dialects is that Maithilī has been under the influence of learned Brāhmins for centuries, while Magahī is the language of a people who have been dubbed boors since Vedic times. To a native of India, one of its most objectionable features is its habit of winding up every

* The sketch of Magahī is condensed from the account given in Dr. Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. V.

question, even when addressed to a person held in respect, with the word '*re*'. In other parts of India this word is only used in addressing an inferior, or when speaking contemptuously. Hence a man of Magah has the reputation of rudeness and his liability to get an undeserved beating on that score has been commemorated in a popular song. Magah has no indigenous literature, but there are many popular songs current throughout the area in which the language is spoken, and strolling bards recite various long epic poems, such as the song of Lorik, the cow-herd hero, and the song of Gopichandra, which are known more or less over the whole of Northern India. The character in general use in writing is the Kaithi, but the Devanāgarī is also used by the educated classes.

Muhammadans and Kāyasths here, as elsewhere in Bihār, mostly speak the Awadhī dialect of Eastern Hindī (literally the language of Oudh), which Dr. Grierson considers is possibly an example of the survival of the influence of the former Muhammadan court of Lucknow. It is estimated that in Gayā 64,500 persons speak Awadhī; and this dialect is also used as a sort of language of politeness, especially when Europeans are addressed, by the rustics, who have picked it up from their Musalmān friends and imagine it to be the Hindustānī of polite society. The Devanāgarī and the Kaithi characters are both used in writing Awadhī; and the Persian character is also occasionally used by the educated classes.

Dr. Grierson points out that the three great dialects of Bihārī Hindī fall naturally into two groups, viz., Maithilī and Magahī on the one hand and Bhojpurī on the other, and that the speakers are also separated by ethnic differences. Magahī and Maithilī and the speakers of these two dialects are, however, much more closely connected together than either of the pair is to Bhojpurī, and Magahī might very easily be classed as a sub-dialect of Maithilī rather than as a separate dialect. They are the dialects of nationalities which have carried conservatism to the excess of uncouthness, while Bhojpurī is the practical language of an energetic race. "Magadha," he says, "though it is intimately connected with the early history of Buddhism, was far too long a cockpit for contending Musalmān armies, and too long subject to the headquarters of a Musalmān province to remember its

Character
of the
people.

former glories of the Hindu age. A great part of it is wild, barren and sparsely cultivated, and over much of the remainder cultivation is only carried on with difficulty by the aid of great irrigation works widely spread over the country, and dating from prehistoric times. Its peasantry, oppressed for centuries, and even now, under British rule, poorer than that of any other neighbouring part of India, is uneducated and unenterprising. There is an expressive word current in Eastern Hindustān which illustrates the national character. It is 'bhades' and it has two meanings. One is 'uncouth, boorish,' and the other is 'an inhabitant of Magadha.' Which meaning is the original, and which the derivative I do not know; but a whole history is contained in these two syllables."

RELIGIONS.
Muhammadans.

By religion 89·3 per cent. of the population are Hindus (1,840,382), and practically all the remainder are Muhammadans. The latter, who form 10·64 per cent. of the people, are relatively more numerous than in any of the adjoining districts except Patna. The number of Muhammadans appears to be due to the settlement of soldiers of fortune in different parts of Gayā and to the influence they exercised over their Hindu subjects. The north-west of the district was long a centre of Musalmān power owing to the suzerainty of Dāūd Khān, one of Aurangzeb's generals and the founder of Dāūd-nagar who was given 3 *parganas* as a reward for his conquest of Palāmau. Tradition states that many Hindus in these parts embraced Islām during the reign of Aurangzeb, and this tradition is borne out by the fact that in several villages, which now contain Muhammadans, the inhabitants are said to have been originally Bābhans and Kāyasths. In the Nawāda thāna where the number of Muhammadans (29,798) is greatest, Nāmdār Khān and Kāmgār Khān, noted military adventurers of the 18th century, long exercised undisputed power. The former held 14 *parganas* and 84 *ghāt-wāli* tenures, which extended beyond the confines of the district into Patna and Hazāribāgh, and the village of Nāmdārganj in this thāna still commemorates his name; the latter was little better than a freebooter, and his forts are found in every part of the subdivision. In the south of the district there are a large number of Muhammadans of foreign extraction, including many Pathāns who trace back their descent to soldiers of fortune. They are subdivided

into Rohila Pathāns, who claim to be the descendants of Rohilla free-lances and Magahiya Pathāns, who say that their ancestors were Afghāns and that they derive the name Magahiya from their long residence in the country of Magah. It is noticeable that the inhabitants of Kothī south of Sherghāti allege that they originally came from the Afghān valley of Kohāt, and Kothī is known to be the site of a Rohilla frontier fortress captured by Dāūd Khān in his advance against Palāman in 1660. A further accession to the ranks of the Muhammadans is said to have occurred on the fall of Delhi in 1759 A.D., when many members of the Muhammadan nobility attached to the Mughal Court retired to their *jāgīrs* in the Gayā, Patna and Shāhābād districts, bringing a large number of followers in their train. But the pure foreign element is met with for the most part only among the higher classes, the lower classes being recruited mainly from local converts, and the vast preponderance of Jolāhās and Sheikhs gives good grounds for the belief that the majority are either the descendants of such converts or are of mixed origin.

Nearly all the Muhammadans of this district are Sunnis, but there are a few Shiāhs in Gayā, Pāli and a few other villages. The followers of these two sects live in amity, and for many years past the only dispute between them has been about the carrying of the *maṣṣik* and *tīr* in the Alam procession at Gayā. These emblems represent the tragical death of Abbās, the standard-bearer of the Imām Husain, at the battle of Karbala. Husain and his party had been without water for two days, and Abbās went, at the risk of his life, to fetch water from the Euphrates for the child of Husain, who was dying of thirst, and on his way back both he and his skin water-bag were pierced by an arrow. In commemoration of the death of Abbās, it is customary for the Shiāhs of India and other Muhammadan countries to carry a standard (*alam*), to which is attached a leather water-bag (*maṣṣik*) pierced by an arrow (*tīr*) from their houses or the Imāmbāra to the local Karbala during the Muharram procession. In Gayā the Sunni community, which entertains a deep-rooted aversion to the exhibition of these symbols, numbers about 10,000 souls, while the Shiāhs are no more than 200; and in 1882 a disturbance took place which was only quelled by the interference of a large body of police. The carrying of these emblems was accordingly prohibited in the interests of law

and order, in consequence of the feelings of passion and religious animosity which were excited among the Sunnis of Gayā, but since 1897 the spirit of toleration and friendliness between the two communities has rendered it possible to withdraw the prohibition, and the *mashk* and *tīr* have been carried in the Shiah procession.

Christians. At the last census the number of Christians was only 253. Three missionary societies work among the natives, viz., the London Baptist Missionary Society, the London Baptist Zanāna Missionary Society and the World's Faith Missionary Association. The Mission first named was started in 1852, and the work carried on consists of bazar preaching in Gayā, itinerant preaching in the district, the sale of the publications of the Society, and teaching in schools and bible-classes. The second Mission began work in Gayā town in 1891 and at Tekāri a few years prior to this; and the third was started in 1903.

RELIGIOUS
MOVEMENTS.

An account of popular religion has been given in the previous chapter, and it will suffice here to mention the more remarkable of the religious movements which have occurred in recent years. These all took place in the year 1893, when there was an ebullition of religious excitement among the Hindus, which found expression in this as in other Bihār districts in the anti-kine-killing agitation, the ploughmen's begging movement and the tree-daubing mystery.

Anti-kine-
killing
agitation.

The first movement appears to have been due to the activity of the Gorakshinī Sabhās or associations for the protection of cattle. These societies, the legitimate object of which is the care of diseased, aged, and otherwise useless cattle, started a crusade against the killing of kine, sent out emissaries to preach their doctrines, and collected subscriptions to further their objects. The relations between Hindus and Muhammadans soon became severely strained, and in various parts of Bihār the feeling aroused among the former manifested itself in the rescue of cattle from Muhammadans and in objections to their slaughtering cattle and selling the meat. At the beginning of 1893 the Gayā Gorakshinī Sabhā appeared to be confining its efforts to the establishment of asylums for the reception of neglected and starving cattle. But later in the year there was a sudden and dangerous recrudescence of the agitation for the prevention of kine-slaughter, in consequence

mainly of a propaganda carried on by preachers, who gave themselves out as agents of the Sabhā, and began preaching at the various cattle fairs which were held in April. The trouble commenced with forcible interference on the part of Hindus with Musalmān purchasers of cattle at the Bīsua fair held near Gayā, but fortunately there was no general disturbance, nor was any violence resorted to. Special police precautions were taken to prevent similar occurrences at other fairs held in the west of the district during that month, and nothing happened at them; but a drove of Commissariat cattle were attacked near Arwal on their way from the Deckund fair to Dinapore, and all were driven off. The minds of the ignorant people in the interior meanwhile got excited over the question, and there is good reason to believe that a great proportion of the Hindu zamindārs of the district resolved to take effective measures to stop kine-killing on their estates. The result was a series of disturbances in several places in the interior, although not a single case came to notice in which Muhammadans made any wanton attempt to wound Hindu religious feeling. Fortunately for the peace of the district, no time was lost in getting additional police quartered for one year at the expense of the inhabitants in 31 villages round half-a-dozen centres where the principal disturbances took place. This had an excellent effect on both parties; and at the same time the leaders of the movement were brought to see that nothing but mischief would result from the lawless aspect it was assuming. Many people entertained great apprehension for the safety of Gayā town on the occasion of the Bakr-Id in the end of June 1893, and in one quarter of it the minds of the people were so excited that the shops were closed against Muhammadans for four days before the festival. Before it came round, however, all the leading members of the community on both sides, including the office-bearers of the Gorakshinī Sabhā, were enlisted in support of law and order, and the Bakr-Id passed off without the slightest disturbance anywhere in the district.

The ploughmen's begging movement, or, as it should more properly be called, the Mahādeo *pūjā*, was a curious exhibition of religious feeling which occurred soon afterwards. All ploughmen, the story goes, were obliged to give their cattle three days' rest and go round the neighbouring villages begging. With the

Ploughmen's begging movement.

proceeds three wheaten cakes were prepared—one for the ploughman himself, one for his cattle, while the third had to be buried under their stalls. This penance was performed by the people in consequence of a rumour that it had been imposed by the god Mahādeo to expiate the sin committed by the agricultural community in overworking their cattle. For some time the people continued to carry out, with scrupulous care, the orders which they supposed had been given them by their god. The remarkably elaborate nature of this penance gives reason, however, to suppose that it had been carefully thought out; and its inception and spread among the villagers has been attributed to the efforts of those interested in the Gorakshini agitation to keep the movement afloat.

The tree-
daubing
mystery.

Tree-daubing was another widespread movement, the meaning of which gave rise to much speculation. By the most reliable reports it commenced about the latter end of February 1894 in the north-east corner of Bihār in the neighbourhood of the Janakpur shrine which lies across the border in Nepāl. The movement consisted in marking trees with daubs of mud, in which were stuck hairs of different animals, buffaloes' hair and pigs' bristles predominating. It slowly spread through the Gangetic districts, eastwards into Bhāgalpur and Purnea and westwards through many of the districts of the United Provinces. It appeared in a few places in this district, where it was traced in several instances to wandering gangs of *sādhus*. As an explanation of the movement, it was suggested at the time that the sign was intended as an advertisement of the shrine of Janakpur; and this view was accepted officially. Others, however, held that the marks originated merely with cattle rubbing themselves against trees.*

PRINCIPAL
CASTES.

The numbers and distribution of all the castes exceeding 25,000 persons are given in the Statistical Appendix. Among the Muhammadans Jolāhās (74,252) and Sbeikhs (66,782) bulk most largely, and the only higher caste numbering over 25,000 is the Pathān (25,933). Among the Hindus the most numerous of the higher castes are Rājputs (110,949), Brāhmins (64,350) and Kāyasths (39,038). Many of the functional castes are well represented, such as Kahārs (110,099), Chamārs (81,179), Telis

* For a fuller discussion of the subject, see The Tree-daubing of 1894, Calcutta Review, January 1895.

(58,385), Kurmīs (40,683), Barbīs (38,828), Hajjāms (38,415) and Pāsīs (38,248). A large proportion of the people are of aboriginal descent, and four distinctively indigenous castes, the Bhuiyās (111,831), Musahars (54,559), Rajwārs (53,189) and Kharwārs (9,720), amount to one-ninth of the total population. The Goālās or Ahirs are by far the largest caste, as they account, with a strength of 305,846, for no less than one-seventh of the people; and there are 6 other castes numbering over 100,000, viz., the Bābhans (163,108), Koirīs (145,343), Bhuiyās (111,831), Rajputs (110,919), Kahārs (110,099) and Dosādhs (108,081). These seven castes alone account for more than a half of the aggregate number of persons residing in the district. A short account of each is given below.

The hereditary occupation of the Goālās is that of herdsmen, but with this they combine cultivation, and a large number have given up pastoral pursuits altogether and are only tillers of the soil. They have attained an unenviable reputation as cattle-lifters and furnish more than their proper quota of the jail population. Once every year they offer a peculiar form of worship to Basāwan in order that disease may be averted from the cattle. On the night of the 15th Kārtik, rice is boiled in all the milk left in the house, and the mixture, called *kār*, is then offered to Basāwan. All the cattle are left without food, and next morning their horns are painted red and red spots are daubed on their bodies. They are then turned into a field and ranged round a pig which they gore to death.

The Bābhans or Bhuinhārs are usually landholders and cultivators, and some of them, like the Mahārājā of Tekāri own large estates. They claim to be Brāhmins, and call themselves Ajāchak Brāhmins, *i. e.*, Brāhmins who do not take alms (*jāchak*) in contrast to the ordinary Brāhmins whom they call Jāchaks or almstakers. Like Brāhmins, they will not hold the plough but employ labourers for the purpose. Various traditions as to their origin are current. One is to the effect that they are descended from Brāhmins who took to agricultural pursuits, and one of the titles they claim is zamīndār Brāhman. Another tradition relates that in the war between Parasu Rāma and the Kshatriyas, the latter pretended to be Brāhmins and so saved their lives, as it is a sin to kill a Brāhman. They gave up their lands without